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SERMONS

ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS.

BY

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

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PREFACE.

1 A GENTLEMAN in the west of England informed me a few days ago, that a clergyman in his neighbourhood designed to print, in two or three volumes, the Sermons which had been published in the ten volumes of the Arminian Magazine. I had been frequently solicited to do this myself, and had as often answered, "I leave this for my executors." But if it must be done before I go hence, methinks I am the properest person to do it.

2. I intend, therefore, to set about it without delay: and if it pleases GOD to continue to me a little longer the use of my understanding and memory, I know not that I can employ them better. And perhaps I may be better able than another to revise my own writings; in order, either to retrench what is redundant, to supply what is wanting, or to make any farther alterations which shall appear needful.

3. To make these plain discourses more useful, I purpose now to range them in proper order; placing those first which are intended to throw light on some important Christian doctrines; and afterwards those which more directly relate to some branch of Christian practice: and I shall endeavour to place them all in such an order that one may illustrate and confirm the other. There may be the greater need of this, because they were occasionally written, during a course of years, without any order or connection at all; just as this or the other subject either occurred to my own mind, or was suggested to me at various times by one or another friend.

4. To complete the number of twelve sermons in every volume, I have added six sermons to those printed in the Magazines; and I did this the rather, because the subjects were important, and cannot be too much insisted on.*

5. Is there need to apologize to sensible persons, for the plainness of my style? A gentleman, whom I much love and respect, lately informed me with much tenderness and courtesy, that "men of candour made great allowance for the decay of my faculties; and did not expect me to write now, either with regard to sentiment or language, as I did thirty or forty years ago." Perhaps they are decayed; though I am not conscious of it. But is not this a fit occasion to explain myself, concerning the style I use, from choice, not necessity? I *could*, even now, write as floridly and rhetorically as even the admired Dr. B——; but I dare not; because I seek the honour that cometh of God only.

* This Preface was written by Mr. Wesley for the edition of his Sermons, printed in 4 vols 12mo

What is the praise of man to *me*, that have one foot in the grave, and I am stepping into the land whence I shall not return? Therefore, I dare no more write in a *fine style* than wear a fine coat. But were it otherwise, had I time to spare, I should still write just as I do. I should purposely decline, what many admire, a highly ornamented style. I cannot admire French oratory: I despise it from my heart. Let those that please be in raptures at the pretty, elegant sentences of Massillon or Bourdaloue; but give me the plain, nervous style of Dr. South, Dr Bates, or Mr. John Howe: and for elegance, show me any French writer who exceeds Dean Young or Mr. Seed. Let who will admire the French frippery; I am still for plain, sound English.

6. I think a preacher, or a writer of sermons, has lost his way, when he imitates any of the French orators; even the most famous of them; even Massillon or Bourdaloue. Only let his language be plain, proper and clear, and it is enough. God himself has told us how to speak, both as to the matter and the manner: "If any man speak," in the name of God, "let him speak as the oracles of God;" and if he would imitate any part of these above the rest, let it be the First Epistle of St. John. This is the style, the most excellent style, for every gospel preacher. And let him aim at no more ornament than he finds in that sentence, which is the sum of the whole gospel, "We love him, because he first loved us."

London, Jan. 1, 1788

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SERMON LIX.—*On Eternity.*

"From everlasting to everlasting, thou art God," Psa. xc, 2.

1. I WOULD fain speak of that awful subject, eternity. But how can we grasp it in our thought? It is so vast, that the narrow mind of man is utterly unable to comprehend it. But does it not bear some affinity to another incomprehensible thing, immensity? May not space, though an unsubstantial thing, be compared with another unsubstantial thing, duration? But what is immensity? It is boundless space. And what is eternity? It is boundless duration.

2. Eternity has generally been considered as divisible into two parts; which have been termed eternity *a parte ante*, and eternity *a parte post*, —that is, in plain English, that eternity which is past, and that eternity which is to come. And does there not seem to be an intimation of this distinction in the text? "Thou art God from everlasting:"—Here is an expression of that eternity which is past: "To everlasting:"—Here is an expression of that eternity which is to come. Perhaps indeed some may think it is not strictly proper to say, there is an eternity that is past. But the meaning is easily understood: we mean thereby, duration which had no beginning; as by eternity to come, we mean that duration which will have no end.

3. It is God alone who (to use the exalted language of Scripture) "inhabiteth eternity," in both these senses. The great Creator alone (not any of his creatures) is "from everlasting to everlasting:" it is duration alone, as it had no beginning, so it cannot have any end. On this consideration it is, that one speaks thus, in addressing Immanuel, God with us:—

> "Hail, GOD the Son, with glory crown'd
> Ere time began to be;
> Throned with thy Sire through half the round
> Of wide eternity!"

And again:—

> "Hail, God the SON, with glory crown'd
> When time shall cease to be;
> Throned with the Father through the round
> Of whole eternity!"

4. "Ere time began to be."—But what is time? It is not easy to say, as frequently as we have had the word in our mouth. We know not what it properly is: we cannot well tell how to define it. But is it not, in some sense, a fragment of eternity, broken off at both ends? That portion of duration which commenced when the world began, which will continue as long as this world endures, and then expire for ever? That portion of it, which is at present measured by the revolution of the sun and planets; lying (so to speak) between two eternities,

that which is past, and that which is to come. But as soon as the heavens and the earth flee away from the face of Him that sitteth on the great white throne, time will be no more; but sink for ever into the ocean of eternity!

5. But by what means can a mortal man, the creature of a day, form any idea of eternity? What can we find within the compass of nature to illustrate it by? With what comparison shall we compare it? What is there that bears any resemblance to it? Does there not seem to be some sort of analogy between boundless duration and boundless space? The great Creator, the infinite Spirit, inhabits both the one and the other. This is one of his peculiar prerogatives: "Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?" Yea, not only the utmost regions of creation, but all the expanse of boundless space! Meantime, how many of the children of men may say,

"Lo, on a narrow neck of land,
'Midst two unbounded seas I stand,
Secure, insensible!
A point of time, a moment's space,
Removes me to that heavenly place,
Or shuts me up in hell!"

6. But leaving one of these unbounded seas to the Father of eternity, to whom alone duration without beginning belongs, let us turn our thoughts on duration without end. This is not an incommunicable attribute of the great Creator; but he has been graciously pleased to make innumerable multitudes of his creatures partakers of it. He has imparted this not only to angels and archangels, and all the companies of heaven, who are not intended to die, but to glorify him, and live in his presence for ever; but also to the inhabitants of the earth, who dwell in houses of clay. Their bodies indeed are "crushed before the moth;" but their souls will never die. God made them, as an ancient writer speaks, to be "pictures of his own eternity." Indeed all spirits, we have reason to believe, are clothed with immortality; having no inward principle of corruption, and being liable to no external violence.

7. Perhaps we may go a step farther still: is not matter itself, as well as spirit, in one sense eternal? Not indeed *a parte ante*, as some senseless philosophers, both ancient and modern, have dreamed. Not that any thing had existed from eternity; seeing, if so, it must be God; yea, it must be the one God; for it is impossible there should be two Gods, or two eternals. But although nothing besides the great God can have existed from everlasting,—none else can be eternal *a parte ante;* yet there is no absurdity in supposing that all creatures are eternal, *a parte post.* All matter indeed is continually changing, and that into ten thousand forms; but that it is changeable, does in no wise imply that it is perishable. The substance may remain one and the same, though under innumerable different forms. It is very possible any portion of matter may be resolved into the atoms of which it was originally composed: but what reason have we to believe, that one of these atoms ever was, or ever will be annihilated? It never can, unless by the uncontrollable power of its Almighty Creator. And is it probable that ever he will exert this power, in unmaking any of the things that he hath made? In this also, God is not "a son of man that he should repent." Indeed every creature under heaven does and must continually change its form, which we can now easily account for; as it clearly appears

from late discoveries, that ethereal fire enters into the composition of every part of the creation. Now this is essentially *edax rerum:* it is the universal menstruum, the *discohere* of all things under the sun. By the force of this, even the strongest, the firmest bodies are dissolved. It appears from the experiment repeatedly made by the great lord Bacon, that even diamonds, by a high degree of heat, may be turned into dust; and that in a still higher degree, (strange as it may seem,) they will totally flame away. Yea, by this the heavens themselves will be dissolved; "the elements shall melt with fervent heat." But they will be only dissolved, not destroyed; they will melt, but they will not perish. Though they lose their present form, yet not a particle of them will ever lose its existence; but every atom of them will remain, under one form or other, to all eternity.

8. But still we should inquire, What is this eternity? How shall we pour any light upon this abstruse subject? It cannot be the object of our understanding. And with what comparison shall we compare it? How infinitely does it transcend all these? What are any temporal things, placed in comparison with those that are eternal? What is the duration of the long lived oak, of the ancient castle, of Trajan's pillar, of Pompey's amphitheatre? What is the antiquity of the Tuscan urns, though probably older than the foundation of Rome; yea, of the pyramids of Egypt, suppose they have remained upwards of three thousand years;—when laid in the balance with eternity? It vanishes into nothing. Nay, what is the duration of "the everlasting hills," figuratively so called, which have remained ever since the general deluge, if not from the foundation of the world, in comparison of eternity? No more than an insignificant cipher. Go farther yet: consider the duration, from the creation of the first-born sons of God, of Michael the archangel in particular, to the hour when he shall be commissioned to sound his trumpet, and to utter his mighty voice through the vault of heaven, "Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment!" Is it not a moment, a point, a nothing, in comparison of unfathomable eternity? Add to this a thousand, a million of years, add a million of million of ages, "before the mountains were brought forth, or the earth and the round world were made:" what is all this in comparison of that eternity which is past? Is it not less, infinitely less, than a single drop of water to the whole ocean? Yea, immeasurably less than a day, an hour, a moment, to a million of ages! Go back a thousand millions still; yet you are no nearer the beginning of eternity.

9. Are we able to form a more adequate conception of eternity to come? In order to this, let us compare it with the several degrees of duration which we are acquainted with. An ephemeron fly lives six hours; from six in the evening, to twelve. This is a short life compared to that of a man, which continues three score or four score years, and this itself is short, if it be compared to the nine hundred and sixty-nine years of Methuselah. Yet what are these years, yea, all that have succeeded each other, from the time that the heavens and the earth were erected, to the time when the heavens shall pass away, and the earth with the works of it shall be burned up, if we compare it to the length of that duration which never shall have an end?

10. In order to illustrate this, a late author has repeated that striking thought of St. Cyprian: Suppose there were a ball of sand, as large as

the globe of earth; suppose a grain of this sand were to be annihilated reduced to nothing, in a thousand years; yet that whole space of duration, wherein this ball would be annihilating, at the rate of one grain in a thousand years, would bear infinitely less proportion to eternity, duration without end, than a single grain of sand would bear to all the mass!

11. To infix this important point the more deeply in your mind, consider another comparison: Suppose the ocean to be so enlarged, as to include all the space between the earth and the starry heavens. Suppose a drop of this water to be annihilated once in a thousand years; yet that whole space of duration, wherein this ocean would be annihilating, at the rate of one drop in a thousand years, would be infinitely less, in proportion to eternity, than one drop of water to that whole ocean.

Look then at those immortal spirits, whether they are in this or the other world When they shall have lived thousands of thousands of years, yea, millions of millions of ages, their duration will be but just begun: they will be only upon the threshold of eternity!

12. But besides this division of eternity into that which is past, and that which is to come, there is another division of eternity, which is of unspeakable importance: that which is to come, as it relates to immortal spirits, is either a happy or a miserable eternity.

13. See the spirits of the righteous that are already praising God in a happy eternity! We are ready to say, How short will it appear to those who drink of the rivers of pleasure at God's right hand? We are ready to cry out,

"A day without night
They dwell in his sight,
And eternity seems as a day!"

But this is only speaking after the manner of men: for the measures of long and short are only applicable to time, which admits of bounds and not to unbounded duration. This rolls on, (according to our low conceptions) with unutterable, inconceivable swiftness; if one would not rather say, it does not roll or move at all, but is one still, immovable ocean. For the inhabitants of heaven "rest not day and night," but continually cry, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord, the God, the Almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come!" And when millions of millions of ages are elapsed, their eternity is but just begun.

14. On the other hand, in what condition are those immortal spirits who have made choice of a miserable eternity? I say, made choice; for it is impossible this should be the lot of any creature, but by his own act and deed. The day is coming when every soul will be constrained to acknowledge, in the sight of men and angels,

"No dire decree of thine did seal,
Or fix the unalterable doom;
Consign my unborn soul to hell,
Or damn me from my mother's womb."

In what condition will such a spirit be after the sentence is executed; "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels?" Suppose him to be just now plunged into "the lake of fire burning with brimstone," where "they have no rest, day or night, but the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever." Why, if we were only to be chained down one day, yea, one hour, in a lake of fire, how amazingly long would one day or one hour appear! I know

not if it would not seem as a thousand years. But (astonishing thought!) after thousands of thousands, he has but just tasted of his bitter cup! After millions of millions, it will be no nearer the end than it was the moment it began!

15. What then is he, how foolish, how mad, in how unutterable a degree of distraction, who, seeming to have the understanding of a man, deliberately prefers temporal things to eternal? Who (allowing that absurd, impossible supposition, that wickedness is happiness,—a supposition utterly contrary to all reason, as well as to matter of fact) prefers the happiness of a year, say a thousand years, to the happiness of eternity, in comparison of which, a thousand ages are infinitely less than a year, a day, a moment? Especially when we take this into the consideration, (which indeed should never be forgotten,) that the refusing a happy eternity, implies the choosing of a miserable eternity: for there is not, cannot be, any medium between everlasting joy and everlasting pain. It is a vain thought which some have entertained, that death will put an end to the soul as well as the body: it will put an end to neither the one nor the other; it will only alter the manner of their existence. But when the body "returns to the dust as it was, the spirit will return to God that gave it." Therefore, at the moment of death, it must be unspeakably happy, or unspeakably miserable: and that misery will *never* end.

> "*Never!* Where sinks the soul at that dread sound?
> Into a gulf how dark, and how profound!"

How often would he, who had made the wretched choice, wish for the death both of his soul and body? It is not impossible he might pray in some such manner as Dr. Young supposes:—

> "When I have writh'd ten thousand years in fire;
> Ten thousand thousand, let me then expire!"

16. Yet this unspeakable folly, this unutterable madness, of preferring present things to eternal, is the disease of every man born into the world, while in his natural state. For such is the constitution of our nature, that as the eye sees only such a portion of space at once, so the mind sees only such a portion of time at once. And as all the space that lies beyond this is invisible to the eye, so all the time which lies beyond that compass is invisible to the mind. So that we do not perceive either the space or the time which is at a distance from us. The eye sees distinctly the space that is near it, with the objects which it contains: in like manner, the mind sees distinctly those objects which are within such a distance of time. The eye does not see the beauties of China: they are at too great a distance: there is too great a space between us and them: therefore, we are not affected by them. They are as nothing to us: it is just the same to us as if they had no being. For the same reason, the mind does not see either the beauties or the terrors of eternity. We are not at all affected by them, because they are so distant from us. On this account it is, that they appear to us as nothing; just as if they had no existence. Meantime we are wholly taken up with things present, whether in time or space; and things appear less and less, as they are more and more distant from us, either in one respect or the other. And so it must be; such is the constitution of our nature; till nature is changed by almighty grace. But this is no manner of excuse for those who continue in their natural

blindness to futurity; because a remedy for it is provided, which is found by all that seek it: yea, it is freely given to all that sincerely ask it.

17. This remedy is faith. I do not mean, that which is the faith of a heathen, who believes that there is a God, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him; but that which is defined by the apostle, "an evidence," or conviction, "of things not seen," a divine evidence and conviction of the invisible and eternal world. This alone opens the eyes of the understanding, to see God and the things of God. This, as it were, takes away, or renders transparent, the impenetrable veil,

"Which hangs 'twixt mortal and immortal being."

When

"Faith lends its realizing light,
The clouds disperse, the shadows fly;
The' invisible appears in sight,
And God is seen by mortal eye."

Accordingly, a believer, in the scriptural sense, lives in eternity and walks in eternity. His prospect is enlarged. His view is not any longer bounded by present things: no, nor by an earthly hemisphere; though it were, as Milton speaks, "Tenfold the length of this terrene." Faith places the unseen, the eternal world, continually before his face Consequently, he looks not at "the things that are seen;"—

"Wealth, honour, pleasure, or what else,
This short enduring world can give;"

these are not his aim, the object of his pursuit, his desire or happiness; —but at "the things that are not seen;" at the favour, the image, and the glory of God; as well knowing, that "the things which are seen are temporal," a vapour, a shadow, a dream that vanishes away; whereas "the things that are not seen are eternal;" real, solid, unchangeable.

18. What then can be a fitter employment for a wise man, than to meditate upon these things? Frequently to expand his thoughts "beyond the bounds of this diurnal sphere," and to expatiate above even the starry heavens, in the fields of eternity? What a means might it be, to confirm his contempt of the poor, little things of earth? When a man of huge possessions was boasting to his friend of the largeness of his estate, Socrates desired him to bring a map of the earth, and to point out Attica therein. When this was done, (although not very easily, as it was a small country,) he next desired Alcibiades to point out his own estate therein. When he could not do this, it was easy to observe how trifling the possessions were, in which he so prided himself, in comparison of the whole earth! How applicable is this to the present case. Does any one value himself on his earthly possessions? Alas, what is the whole globe of earth to the infinity of space? A mere speck of creation. And what is the life of man, yea, the duration of the earth itself, but a speck of time, if it be compared to the length of eternity! Think of this: let it sink into your thought, till you have some conception, however imperfect, of that

"Boundless, fathomles abyss,
Without a bottom or a shore."

19. But if naked eternity, so to speak, be so vast, so astonishing an object as even to overwhelm your thought, how does it still enlarge the idea to behold it clothed with either happiness or misery! Eternal bliss or pain! Everlasting happiness, or everlasting misery! One would think

it would swallow up every other thought in every reasonable creature Allow me only this,—"Thou art on the brink of either a happy or miserable eternity; thy Creator bids thee now stretch out thy hand, either to the one or the other;"—and one would imagine no rational creature could think on any thing else. One would suppose, that this single point would engross his whole attention. Certainly it ought so to do: certainly if these things are so, there can be but one thing needful. Oh let you and I, at least, whatever others do, choose that better part which shall never be taken away from us!

20. Before I close this subject, permit me to touch upon two remarkable passages in the Psalms, (one in the 8th, the other in the 144th,) which bear a near relation to it. The former is, 'When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers; the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" Here man is considered as a cipher, a point, compared to immensity. The latter is, "Lord, what is man, that thou hast such respect unto him? Man is like a thing of nought: his time passeth away like a shadow!" In the new translation the words are stronger still: "What is man that thou takest knowledge of him; or the son of man that thou makest account of him?" Here the Psalmist seems to consider the life of man as a moment, a nothing, compared to eternity. Is not the purport of the former, "How can he that filleth heaven and earth, take knowledge of such an atom as man? How is it that he is not utterly lost in the immensity of God's works?" Is not the purport of the latter, "How can he that inhabiteth eternity, stoop to regard the creature of a day,—one whose life passeth away like a shadow?" Is not this a thought which has struck many serious minds, as well as it did David's, and created a kind of fear lest they should be forgotten before him, who grasps all space and all eternity? But does not this fear arise from a kind of supposition that God is such a one as ourselves? If we consider boundless space, or boundless duration, we shrink into nothing before it. But God is not a man. A day, and millions of ages, are the same with him. Therefore there is the same disproportion between him and any finite being, as between him and the creature of a day. Therefore, whenever that thought recurs, whenever you are tempted to fear lest you should be forgotten before the immense the eternal God, remember that nothing is little or great, that no duration is long or short before him. Remember that God "ita præsidet singulis sicut universis, et universis sicut singulis:" that he presides over every individual as over the universe; and the universe, as over each individual. So that you may boldly say,

"Father, how wide thy glories shine,
Lord of the universe—and mine!
Thy goodness watches o'er the whole,
As all the world were but one soul;
Yet counts my every sacred hair,
As I remain'd thy single care!"

Sermon LX.—*On the Trinity.*

ADVERTISEMENT.

Some days since, I was desired to preach on this text. I did so yesterday morning. In the afternoon, I was pressed to write down and print my sermon, if possible, before I left Cork. I have wrote it this morning; but I must beg the reader to make allowance for the disadvantages I am under; as I have not here any books to consult, nor indeed any time to consult them.

Cork, May 8, 1775.

"There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one," 1 John v, 7.

1. Whatsoever the generality of people may think, it is certain that opinion is not religion: no, not right opinion; assent to one, or to ten thousand truths. There is a wide difference between them: even right opinion is as distant from religion as the east is from the west. Persons may be quite right in their opinions, and yet have no religion at all; and on the other hand, persons may be truly religious, who hold many wrong opinions. Can any one possibly doubt of this, while there are Romanists in the world? For who can deny, not only that many of them formerly have been truly religious, (as Thomas à Kempis, Gregory Lopez, and the Marquis de Renty,) but that many of them, even at this day, are real inward Christians! And yet what a heap of erroneous opinions do they hold, delivered by tradition from their fathers! Nay, who can doubt of it while there are Calvinists in the world, assertors of absolute predestination? For who will dare to affirm that none of these are truly religious men? Not only many of them in the last century were burning and shining lights, but many of them are now real Christians, loving God and all mankind. And yet what are all the absurd opinions of all the Romanists in the world, compared to that one, that the God of love, the wise, just, merciful Father of the spirits of all flesh, has, from all eternity, fixed an absolute, unchangeable, irresistible decree, that part of mankind shall be saved, do what they will, and the rest damned, do what they can!

2. Hence, we cannot but infer, that there are ten thousand mistakes, which may consist with real religion; with regard to which every candid, considerate man will think and let think. But there are some truths more important than others. It seems there are some which are of deep importance. I do not term them *fundamental* truths; because that is an ambiguous word: and hence there have been so many warm disputes about the number of *fundamentals*. But surely there are some, which it nearly concerns us to know, as having a close connection with vital religion. And doubtless we may rank among these, that contained in the words above cited, "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one."

3. I do not mean, that it is of importance to believe this or that *explication* of these words. I know not that any well judging man would attempt to explain them at all. One of the best tracts which that great man, Dean Swift, ever wrote, was his Sermon upon the Trinity. Herein he shows, that all who endeavoured to explain it at all, have utterly lost their way; have, above all other persons, hurt the cause, which they

intended to promote; having only, as Job speaks, "darkened counsel by words without knowledge." It was in an evil hour, that these explainers began their fruitless work. I insist upon no explication at all; no, not even on the best I ever saw; I mean, that which is given us in the creed commonly ascribed to Athanasius. I am far from saying, he who does not assent to this, "shall without doubt perish everlastingly." For the sake of that and another clause, I, for some time, scrupled subscribing to that creed; till I considered, 1. That these sentences only relate to *wilful*, not involuntary unbelievers; to those who, having all the means of knowing the truth, nevertheless obstinately reject it: 2. That they relate only to the *substance* of the doctrine there delivered; not the philosophical *illustrations* of it.

4. I dare not insist upon any one's using the word Trinity or Person. I use them myself without any scruple, because I know of none better: but if any man has any scruple concerning them, who shall constrain him to use them? I cannot: much less would I burn a man alive, and that with moist green wood, for saying, "Though I believe the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God, yet I scruple using the words *Trinity* and *Persons*, because I do not find those terms in the Bible." These are the words which merciful John Calvin cites as wrote by Servetus in a letter to himself. I would insist only on the direct words, unexplained, just as they lie in the text: "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one."

5. "As they lie in the text:"—But here arises a question: Is that text genuine? Was it originally written by the apostle, or inserted in later ages? Many have doubted of this; and, in particular, that great light of the Christian church, lately removed to the church above, Bengelius,—the most pious, the most judicious, and the most laborious, of all the modern commentators on the New Testament. For some time he stood in doubt of its authenticity, because it is wanting in many of the ancient copies. But his doubts were removed by three considerations: 1. That though it is wanting in many copies, yet it is found in more; and those copies of the greatest authority:—2. That it is cited by a whole train of ancient writers, from the time of St. John to that of Constantine. This argument is conclusive: for they could not have cited it, had it not then been in the sacred canon:—3. That we can easily account for its being, after that time, wanting in many copies, when we remember, that Constantine's successor was a zealous Arian, who used every means to promote his bad cause, to spread Arianism throughout the empire; in particular, the erasing this text out of as many copies as fell into his hands. And he so far prevailed, that the age in which he lived, is commonly styled, *Seculum Arianum*, the Arian age; there being then only one eminent man, who opposed him at the peril of his life. So that it was a proverb, *Athanasius contra mundum:* Athanasius against the world.

6. But it is objected: "Whatever becomes of the text, we cannot believe what we cannot comprehend. When, therefore, you require us to believe mysteries, we pray you to have us excused."

Here is a twofold mistake: 1. We do not require you to believe any mystery in this; whereas you suppose the contrary. But, 2. You do already believe many things which you cannot comprehend.

7. To begin with the latter: You do already believe many things which you cannot comprehend. For you believe there is a *sun* over your head. But whether he stands still in the midst of his system, or not only revolves on his own axis, but "rejoiceth as a giant to run his course;" you cannot comprehend either one or the other: *how* he moves, or *how* he rests. By what power, what natural, mechanical power, is he upheld in the fluid ether? You cannot deny the fact: yet you cannot account for it, so as to satisfy any rational inquirer. You may, indeed, give us the hypothesis of Ptolemy, Tycho Brahe, Copernicus, and twenty more. I have read them over and over: I am sick of them; I care not three straws for them all.

> "Each new solution but once more affords
> New change of terms, and scaffolding of words:
> In other garb my question I receive,
> And take my doubt the very same I gave."

Still I insist, the *fact* you believe, you cannot deny; but the *manner* you cannot comprehend.

8. You believe there is such a thing as *light*, whether flowing from the sun, or any other luminous body; but you cannot comprehend either its nature, or the manner wherein it flows. How does it move from Jupiter to the earth in eight minutes; two hundred thousand miles in a moment? How do the rays of the candle, brought into the room, instantly disperse into every corner? Again, here are three candles, yet there is but one light. Explain this, and I will explain the three-one God.

9. You believe there is such a thing as *air*. It both covers you as a garment, and,

> "Wide interfused,
> Embraces round this florid earth."

But can you comprehend how? Can you give me a satisfactory account of its nature, or the cause of its properties? Think only of one, its elasticity: can you account for this? It may be owing to electric fire attached to each particle of it: it may not; and neither you nor I can tell. But if we will not breathe it, till we can comprehend it, our life is very near its period.

10. You believe there is such a thing as *earth*. Here you fix your foot upon it: you are supported by it. But do you comprehend what it is that supports the earth? "Oh, an elephant;" says a Malabarian philosopher, "and a bull supports him." But what supports the bull? The Indian and the Briton are equally at a loss for an answer. We know it is God that "spreadeth the north over the empty space, and hangeth the earth upon nothing." This is the fact. But how? Who can account for this? Perhaps angelic, but not human creatures.

I know what is plausibly said concerning the powers of projection and attraction. But spin as fine as we can, matter of fact sweeps away our cobweb hypothesis. Connect the force of projection and attraction how you can, they will never produce a circular motion. The moment the projected steel comes within the attraction of the magnet, it does not form a curve, but drops down.

11. You believe you have a *soul*. "Hold there," says the doctor:* "I believe no such thing. If *you* have an immaterial soul, so have the

* Dr. Bl—r, in his late Tract.

brutes too." I will not quarrel with any that think they have; nay, I wish he could prove it: and surely I would rather allow *them* souls, than I would give up my own. In this I cordially concur in the sentiment of the honest heathen, *Si erro, libenter erro; et me redargui valde recusem* If I err, I err willingly; and I vehemently refuse to be convinced of it. And I trust most of those who do not believe a Trinity are of the same mind. Permit me then to go on. You believe you have a soul connected with this house of clay. But can you comprehend how? What are the ties that unite the heavenly flame with the earthly clod? You understand just nothing of the matter. So it is; but how, none can tell.

12. You surely believe you have a *body*, together with your soul, and that each is dependant on the other. Run only a thorn into your hand; immediately pain is felt in your soul. On the other side, is shame felt in your soul? Instantly a blush overspreads your cheek. Does the soul feel fear or violent anger? Presently the body trembles. These also are facts which you cannot deny; nor can you account for them.

13. I bring but one instance more: at the command of your soul, your hand is lifted up. But who is able to account for this? For the connection between the act of the mind, and the outward actions? Nay, who can account for *muscular motion* at all; in any instance of it whatever? When one of the most ingenious physicians in England had finished his lecture upon that head, he added, "Now, gentlemen, I have told you all the discoveries of our enlightened age; and now, if you understand one jot of the matter, you understand more than I do."

The short of the matter is this: those who will not believe any thing but what they can comprehend, must not believe that there is a sun in the firmament; that there is light shining around them; that there is air, though it encompasses them on every side; that there is any earth, though they stand upon it. They must not believe that they have a soul; no, nor that they have a body.

14. But, secondly, as strange as it may seem, in requiring you to believe, that "there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one;" you are not required to believe any mystery. Nay, that great and good man, Dr. Peter Browne, some time bishop of Cork, has proved at large, that the Bible does not require you to believe any mystery at all. The Bible barely requires you to believe such facts; not the manner of them. Now the mystery does not lie in the *fact*, but altogether in the *manner*.

For instance: "God said, Let there be light: and there was light." I believe it: I believe the plain *fact:* there is no mystery at all in this. The mystery lies in the *manner* of it. But of this I believe nothing at all; nor does God require it of me

Again: "The Word was made flesh." I believe this fact also There is no mystery in it; but as to the *manner, how* he was made flesh, wherein the mystery lies, I know nothing about it; I believe nothing about it: it is no more the object of my faith, than it is of my understanding

15. To apply this to the case before us: "There are three that bear record in heaven; and these three are one." I believe this *fact* also, (if I may use the expression,) that God is three and one. But the *manner, how,* I do not comprehend; and I do not believe it. Now in this, in the *manner,* lies the mystery; and so it may; I have no concern

with it: it is no object of my faith: I believe just so much as God has revealed, and no more. But this, the *manner*, he has not revealed: therefore I believe nothing about it. But would it not be absurd in me to deny the fact, because I do not understand the manner? That is, to reject *what God has revealed*, because I do not comprehend *what he has not revealed.*

16. This is a point much to be observed. There are many things "which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive." Part of these God hath "revealed to us by his Spirit:"—"*Revealed;*" that is, unveiled, uncovered: that part he requires us to believe. Part of them he has not revealed: that we need not, and indeed, cannot believe: it is far above, out of our sight.

Now where is the wisdom of rejecting what is revealed, because we do not understand what is not revealed? Of denying the *fact*, which God has unveiled, because we cannot see the *manner*, which is veiled still?

17. Especially when we consider that what God has been pleased to reveal upon this head, is far from being a point of indifference; is a truth of the last importance. It enters into the very heart of Christianity: it lies at the root of all vital religion.

Unless these three are one, how can "all men honour the Son, even as they honour the Father?" "I know not what to do," says Socinus in a letter to his friend, "with my untoward followers: they will not worship Jesus Christ. I tell them, it is written, 'Let all the angels of God worship him.' They answer, However that be, if he is not God, we dare not worship him. For 'it is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.'"

But the thing which I here particularly mean, is this: the knowledge of the Three-One God is interwoven with all true Christian faith; with all vital religion.

I do not say, that every real Christian can say with the Marquis de Renty, "I bear about with me continually an experimental verity, and a plenitude of the presence of the ever blessed Trinity." I apprehend this is not the experience of "babes," but rather "fathers in Christ."

But I know not how any one can be a Christian believer, till he 'hath [as St. John speaks] the witness in himself;" till "the Spirit of God witnesses with his spirit, that he is a child of God;" that is, in effect, till God the Holy Ghost witnesses that God the Father has accepted him through the merits of God the Son: and, having this witness, he honours the Son, and the blessed Spirit, "even as he honours the Father."

18. Not that every Christian believer *adverts* to this; perhaps, at first, not one in twenty: but if you ask any of them a few questions, you will easily find it is implied in what he believes.

Therefore I do not see how it is possible for any to have vital religion, who denies that these three are one. And all my hope for them is, not that they will be saved, during their unbelief; (unless on the footing of honest heathens, upon the plea of invincible ignorance;) but that God, before they go hence, will "bring them to the knowledge of the truth."

SERMON LXI.—*God's Approbation of His Works.*

"And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good," Gen. i, 31.

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1. WHEN God created the heavens and the earth, and all that is therein, at the conclusion of each day's work, it is said, "And God saw that it was good." Whatever was created was good in its kind; suited to the end for which it was designed; adapted to promote the good of the whole, and the glory of the great Creator. This sentence it pleased God to pass with regard to each particular creature. But there is a remarkable variation of the expression, with regard to all the parts of the universe, taken in connection with each other, and constituting one system: "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good."

2. How small a part of this great work of God is man able to understand! But it is our duty to contemplate what he has wrought, and to understand as much of it as we are able. For "the merciful Lord," as the psalmist observes, "hath so done his marvellous works" of creation, as well as of providence, "that they ought to be had in remembrance" by all that fear him; which they cannot well be, unless they are understood. Let us, then, by the assistance of that Spirit who giveth unto man understanding, endeavour to take a general survey of the works which God made in this lower world, as they were before they were disordered and depraved in consequence of the sin of man: we shall then easily see, that as every creature was *good* in its primeval state; so, when all were compacted in one general system, "behold, they were very good." I do not remember to have seen any attempt of this kind, unless in that truly excellent poem, (termed by Mr. Hutchinson, "That wicked farce!") Milton's "Paradise Lost."

I. 1. "In the beginning God created the matter of the heavens and the earth." (So the words, as a great man observes, may properly be translated.) He first created the four elements, out of which the whole universe was composed; earth, water, air, and fire, all mingled together in one common mass. The grossest parts of this, the earth and water, were utterly without form, till God infused a principle of motion, commanding the air to move "upon the face of the waters." In the next place, "the Lord God said, Let there be light: and there was light." Here were the four constituent parts of the universe; the true, original, simple elements. They were all essentially distinct from each other; and yet so intimately mixed together, in all compound bodies, that we cannot find any, be it ever so minute, which does not contain them all.

2. "And God saw that" every one of these "was good;" was perfect, in its kind. The earth was good. The whole surface of it was beautiful in a high degree. To make it more agreeable,

> "He clothed
> The universal face with pleasant green."

He adorned it with flowers of every hue, and with shrubs and trees of every kind. And every part was fertile as well as beautiful; it was no way deformed by rough or ragged rocks; it did not shock the view with horrid precipices, huge chasms, or dreary caverns; with deep, impass

able morasses, or deserts of barren sand. But we have not any authority to say, with some learned and ingenious authors, that there were no mountains on the original earth, no unevenness on its surface. It is not easy to reconcile this hypothesis with those words of Moses, "The waters prevailed; and all the high hills that were under the whole heaven, were covered. Fifteen cubits upward [above the highest] did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered," Gen. vii, 19–23. We have no reason to believe that these mountains were produced by the deluge itself: not the least intimation of this is given: therefore we cannot doubt but they existed before it.—Indeed they answered many excellent purposes, besides greatly increasing the beauty of the creation, by a variety of prospects, which had been totally lost had the earth been one extended plain. Yet we need not suppose their sides were abrupt, or difficult of ascent. It is highly probable that they rose and fell by almost insensible degrees.

3. As to the internal parts of the earth, even to this day, we have scarce any knowledge of them. Many have supposed the centre of the globe to be surrounded with an abyss of fire. Many others have imagined it to be encompassed with an abyss of water; which they supposed to be termed in Scripture, "the great deep," Gen. vii, 11; all the fountains of which were broken up, in order to the general deluge. But, however this was, we are sure all things were disposed therein with the most perfect order and harmony. Hence there were no agitations within the bowels of the globe; no violent convulsions; no concussions of the earth; no earthquakes; but all was unmoved as the pillars of heaven! There were then no such things as eruptions of fire; there were no volcanoes, or burning mountains. Neither Vesuvius, Etna, nor Hecla, if they had any being, then poured out smoke and flame, but were covered with a verdant mantle, from the top to the bottom.

4. The element of water, it is probable, was then mostly confined within the great abyss. In the new earth, (as we are informed by the apostle, Rev. xxi, 1,) "there will be no more sea;" none covering as now the face of the earth, and rendering so large a part of it uninhabitable by man. Hence it is probable, there was no external sea in the paradisiacal earth; none, until the great deep burst the barriers which were originally appointed for it.—Indeed there was not then that need of the ocean for navigation which there is now: for either, as the poet supposes,

Omnis tulit omnia tellus;

every country produced whatever was requisite either for the necessity or comfort of its inhabitants; or man, being then (as he will be again at the resurrection) equal to angels, was made able to convey himself, at his pleasure, to any given distance; over and above that, those flaming messengers were always ready to minister to the heirs of salvation. But whether there was sea or not, there were rivers sufficient to water the earth, and make it very plenteous. These answered all the purposes of convenience and pleasure, by

"liquid lapse of murmuring stream;"

to which were added gentle, genial showers, with salutary mists and exhalations. But there were no putrid lakes, no turbid or stagnating waters; but only such as

"Bore imprest
Fair nature's image on their placid breast."

5. The element of air was then always serene, and always friendly to man. It contained no frightful meteor, no unwholesome vapours, no poisonous exhalations. There were no tempests, but only cool and gentle breezes,

Genitabilis aura Favoni;

fanning both man and beast, and wafting the fragrant odours on their silent wings.

6. The sun, the fountain of fire,

"Of this great world both eye and soul,"

was situated at the most exact distance from the earth, so as to yield a sufficient quantity of heat (neither too little nor too much) to every part of it. God had not yet

"Bid his angels turn askance
This oblique globe."

There was therefore then no country that groaned under

"The rage of Arctos, and eternal frost."

There was no violent winter, or sultry summer; no extreme, either of heat or cold. No soil was burnt up by the solar heat; none uninhabitable through the want of it. Thus earth, water, air, and fire, all conspired together to the welfare and pleasure of man!

7. To the same purpose served the grateful vicissitude of light and darkness, day and night. For as the human body, though not liable to death or pain, yet needed continual sustenance by food; so, although it was not liable to weariness, yet it needed continual reparation by sleep. By this the springs of the animal machine were wound up from time to time, and kept always fit for the pleasing labour for which man was designed by his Creator. Accordingly "the evening and the morning were the first day," before sin or pain was in the world. The first natural day had one part dark, for a season of repose; one part light, for a season of labour. And even in paradise "Adam slept," Gen. ii, 21, before he sinned: sleep, therefore, belonged to innocent human nature. Yet I do not apprehend it can be inferred from hence, that there is either darkness or sleep in heaven. Surely there is no darkness in that city of God. Is it not expressly said, Rev. xxii, 5, "there shall be no night there?" Indeed they have no light from the sun; but "the Lord giveth them light." So it is all day in heaven, as it is all night in hell! On earth we have a mixture of both. Day and night succeed each other, till earth shall be turned to heaven. Neither can we at all credit the account given by the ancient poet, concerning sleep in heaven; although he allows "cloud-compelling Jove" to remain awake, while the inferior gods were sleeping. It is pity, therefore, that our great poet should copy so servilely after the old heathen, as to tell us,

"Sleep had seal'd
All but the unsleeping eyes of God himself."

Not so: they that are "before the throne of God, serve him day and night," speaking after the manner of men, "in his temple," Rev. vii, 15; that is, without any interval. As wicked spirits are tormented day and night, without any intermission of their misery; so holy spirits enjoy God day and night, without any intermission of their happiness.

8. On the second day God encompassed the terraqueous globe with that noble appendage, the atmosphere, consisting chiefly of air; but replete with earthly particles of various kinds, and with huge volumes of water, sometimes invisible, sometimes visible, buoyed up by that etherial fire, a particle of which cleaves to every particle of air. By this the water was divided into innumerable drops, which, descending, watered the earth and made it very plenteous, without incommoding any of its inhabitants. For there were then no impetuous currents of air; no tempestuous winds; no furious hail; no torrents of rain; no rolling thunders, or forky lightnings. One perennial spring was perpetually smiling over the whole surface of the earth.

9. On the third day God commanded all kinds of vegetables to spring out of the earth; and then, to add thereto, innumerable herbs, intermixed with flowers of all hues. To these were added shrubs of every kind; together with tall and stately trees, whether for shade, for timber, or for fruit, in endless variety. Some of these were adapted to particular climates, or particular exposures; while vegetables of more general use, (as wheat in particular,) were not confined to one country, but would flourish almost in every climate. But among all these there were no weeds; no useless plants; none that encumbered the ground; much less were there any poisonous ones, tending to hurt any one creature; but every thing was salutary in its kind, suitable to the gracious design of its great Creator.

10. The Lord now created "the sun to rule the day, and the moon to govern the night." The sun was

"Of this great world both eye and soul:"—

the *eye*, making all things visible; distributing light to every part of the system; and thereby rejoicing both earth and sky;—and the *soul;* the principle of all life, whether to vegetables or animals. Some of the uses of the moon we are acquainted with; her causing the ebbing and flowing of the sea, and influencing, in a greater or smaller degree, all the fluids in the terraqueous globe. And many other uses she may have, unknown to us, but known to the wise Creator. But it is certain she had no hurtful, no unwholesome influence on any living creature. "He made the stars also;" both those that move round the sun, whether of the primary or secondary order; or those that, being at a far greater distance, appear to us fixed in the firmament of heaven. Whether comets are to be numbered among the stars, and whether they were parts of the original creation, is, perhaps, not so easy to determine, at least with certainty; as we have nothing but probable conjecture, either concerning their nature or their use. We know not whether (as some ingenious men have imagined) they are ruined worlds,—worlds that have undergone a general conflagration; or whether (as others not improbably suppose) they are immense reservoirs of fluids appointed to revolve at certain seasons, and to supply the still decreasing moisture of the earth. But certain we are, that they did not either produce or portend any evil. They did not, (as many have fancied since,)

"From their horrid hair,
Shake pestilence and war."

11. The Lord God afterwards peopled the earth with animals of every kind. He first commanded the waters to bring forth abundantly;

—to bring forth creatures, which, as they inhabited a grosser element, so they were, in general, of a more stupid nature; endowed with fewer senses, and less understanding, than other animals. The bivalved shell fish, in particular, seem to have no sense but that of feeling, unless, perhaps, a low measure of taste; so that they are but one degree above vegetables. And even the king of the waters, (a title which some give the whale, because of his enormous magnitude,) though he has sight added to taste and feeling, does not appear to have an understanding proportioned to his bulk. Rather he is inferior therein, not only to most birds and beasts, but to the generality of even reptiles and insects. However none of these then attempted to devour, or in any wise hurt one another. All were peaceful and quiet, as were the watery fields wherein they ranged at pleasure.

12. It seems the insect kinds were at least one degree above the inhabitants of the waters. Almost all these too devour one another, and every other creature which they can conquer. Indeed such is the miserably disordered state of the world at present, that innumerable creatures can no otherwise preserve their own lives, than by destroying others. But in the beginning it was not so. The paradisiacal earth afforded a sufficiency of food for all its inhabitants; so that none of them had any need or temptation to prey upon the other. The spider was then as harmless as the fly, and did not then lie in wait for blood. The weakest of them crept securely over the earth, or spread their gilded wings in the air, that wavered in the breeze and glittered in the sun, without any to make them afraid. Meantime, the reptiles of every kind were equally harmless and more intelligent than they; yea, one species of them "was more subtle," or knowing, "than any of the" brute creation "which God had made."

13. But, in general, the birds, created to fly in the open firmament of heaven, appear to have been of an order far superior to either insects or reptiles; although still considerably inferior to beasts: as we now restrain that word to quadrupeds, four-footed animals, which, two hundred years ago, included every kind of living creatures. Many species of these are not only endowed with a large measure of natural understanding, but are likewise capable of much improvement by art, such as one would not readily conceive. But among all these there were no birds or beasts of prey; none that destroyed or molested another; but all the creatures breathed in their several kinds, the benevolence of their great Creator.

14. Such was the state of the creation, according to the scanty ideas which we can now form concerning it, when its great Author, surveying the whole system at one view, pronounced it "very good!" It was good in the highest degree whereof it was capable, and without any mixture of evil. Every part was exactly suited to the others, and conducive to the good of the whole. There was "a golden chain," to use the expression of Plato, "let down from the throne of God;" an exactly connected series of beings, from the highest to the lowest; from dead earth, through fossils, vegetables, animals, to man, created in the image of God, and designed to know, to love, and to enjoy his Creator to all eternity.

II. 1. Here is a firm foundation laid on which we may stand, and answer all the cavils of minute philosophers; all the objections which

"vain men," who "would be wise," make to the goodness or wisdom of God in the creation. All these are grounded upon an entire mistake; namely, that the world is now in the same state it was at the beginning. And upon this supposition they plausibly build abundance of objections But all these objections fall to the ground, when we observe, this supposition cannot be admitted. The world at the beginning was in a totally different state from that wherein we find it now. Object, therefore, whatever you please to the present state, either of the animate or inanimate creation, whether in general, or with regard to any particular instances; and the answer is ready: These are not now as they were in the beginning. Had you, therefore, heard that vain king of Castile, crying out with exquisite self-sufficiency, "If I had made the world, I would have made it better than God Almighty has made it;" you might have replied, "No: God Almighty, whether you know it or not, did not make it as it is now. He himself made it better, unspeakably better than it is at present. He made it without any blemish, yea, without any defect. He made no corruption, no destruction, in the inanimate creation. He made not death in the animal creation; neither its harbingers, sin and pain. If you will not believe his own account, believe your brother heathen: it was only

Post ignem æthereâ domo
Subductum,—

that is, in plain English, after man, in utter defiance of his Maker, had eaten of the tree of knowledge, that

Macies et nova febrium
Terris incubuit cohors;—

that a whole army of evils, totally unknown till then, broke in upon rebel man, and all other creatures, and overspread the face of the earth."

2. "Nay," (says a bold man,* who has since personated a Christian, and so well, that many think him one!) "God is not to blame for either the natural or moral evils that are in the world; (for he made it as well as he could;) seeing evil must exist in the very nature of things." It must *in the present nature* of things, supposing man to have rebelled against God: but evil did not exist at all in the original nature of things. It was no more the necessary result of matter, than it was the necessary result of spirit. All things then, without exception, were very good. And how should they be otherwise? There was no defect at all in the power of God, any more than in his goodness or wisdom. His goodness inclined him to make all things good; and this was executed by his power and wisdom. Let every sensible infidel, then, be ashamed of making such miserable *excuses* for his Creator! He needs none of us to make *apologies*, either for him, or for his creation. "As for God, his way is perfect;" and such originally were all his works; and such they will be again, when "the Son of God" shall have "destroyed [all] the works of the devil."

3. Upon this ground, then, that "God made man upright," and every creature perfect in its kind, but that man "found out to himself many inventions" of happiness independent on God; and that by his apostasy from God, he threw not only himself but likewise the whole creation, which was intimately connected with him, into disorder, misery, death; upon this ground, I say, we do not find it difficult to

* Mr. S—— J——s.

"Justify the ways of God with men.'

For although he left man in the hand of his own counsel, to choose good or evil, life or death; although he did not take away the liberty he had given him, but suffered him to choose death, in consequence of which the whole creation now groaneth together; yet, when we consider, all the evils introduced into the creation may work together for our good, yea, may "work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," we may well praise God for permitting these temporary evils, in order to our eternal good: yea, we may well cry out, "Oh the depth both of the wisdom" and the goodness of God! "He hath done all things well." "Glory be unto God, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever!"

SERMON LXII.—*On the Fall of Man.*

"Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," Gen. iii, 19.

1. WHY is there *pain* in the world? Seeing God is "loving to every man, and his mercy is over all his works?" Because there is *sin:* had there been no sin, there would have been no pain. But pain (supposing God to be just) is the necessary effect of sin. But why is there sin in the world? Because man was created in the image of God: because he is not mere matter, a clod of earth, a lump of clay, without sense or understanding; but a spirit like his Creator, a being endued, not only with sense and understanding, but also with a will exerting itself in various affections. To crown all the rest, he was endued with liberty; a power of directing his own affections and actions; a capacity of determining himself, or of choosing good or evil. Indeed had not man been endued with this, all the rest would have been of no use: had he not been a free, as well as an intelligent being, his understanding would have been as incapable of holiness, or any kind of virtue, as a tree or a block of marble. And having this power, a power of choosing good or evil, he chose the latter: he chose evil. Thus "sin entered into the world," and pain of every kind, preparatory to death.

2. But this plain, simple account of the origin of evil, whether natural or moral, all the wisdom of man could not discover, till it pleased God to reveal it to the world. Till then, man was a mere enigma to himself; a riddle which none but God could solve. And in how full and satisfactory a manner has he solved it in this chapter! In such a manner, as does not indeed serve to gratify vain curiosity, but as is abundantly sufficient to answer a nobler end; to

"Justify the ways of God with men."

To this great end, I would, first, briefly consider the preceding part of this chapter; and then, secondly, more particularly weigh the solemn words which have been already recited.

I. 1. In the first place, let us briefly consider the preceding part of this chapter. "Now the serpent was more subtle," or intelligent, "than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made," ver. 1;—endued with more understanding than any other animal in the brute creation. Indeed there is no improbability in the conjecture of an ingenious man,*

* The late Dr. Nicholas Robinson.

that the serpent was endued with reason, which is now the property of man. And this accounts for a circumstance, which, on any other supposition, would be utterly unintelligible. How comes Eve not to be surprised, yea, startled and affrighted, at hearing the serpent *speak* and *reason;* unless she knew that reason, and speech in consequence of it, were the original properties of the serpent? Hence, without showing any surprise, she immediately enters into conversation with him, "And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" See how he, who was a liar from the beginning, mixes truth and falsehood together! Perhaps on purpose, that she might be the more inclined to speak, in order to clear God of the unjust charge. Accordingly, the woman said unto the serpent, ver. 2, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the tree in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." Thus far she appears to have been clear of blame. But how long did she continue so? "And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know, that, in the day ye eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened; and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil," verses 4, 5. Here sin began; namely, unbelief. "The woman was deceived," says the apostle. She believed a lie: she gave more credit to the word of the devil, than to the word of God. And unbelief brought forth actual sin: "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and pleasant to the eyes, and to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit and did eat;" and so completed her sin. But "the man," as the apostle observes, "was not deceived." How then came he to join in the transgression? "She gave unto her husband and he did eat." He sinned with his eyes open. He rebelled against his Creator, as is highly probable,

> ——"not by stronger reason moved,
> But fondly overcome with female charms."

And if this was the case, there is no absurdity in the assertion of a great man, "That Adam sinned in his heart, before he sinned outwardly; before he ate of the forbidden fruit;" namely, by inward idolatry, by loving the creature more than the Creator.

2. Immediately pain followed sin. When he lost his innocence, he lost his happiness. He painfully feared that God, in the love of whom before his supreme happiness consisted. "He said," verse 10, "I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid." He fled from him, who was, till then, his desire, and glory, and joy. He "hid himself from the presence of the Lord God, among the trees of the garden." Hid himself! What from the all-seeing eye? The eye which, with one glance, pervades heaven and earth? See how his understanding likewise was impaired! What amazing folly was this! Such as one would imagine very few, even of his posterity, could have fallen into. So dreadfully was his "foolish heart darkened" by sin, and guilt, and sorrow, and fear. His innocence was lost; and, at the same time, his happiness and his wisdom. Here is the clear, intelligible answer to that question, How came evil into the world?

3. One cannot but observe, throughout this whole narration, the inexpressible tenderness and lenity of the almighty Creator, from whom they had revolted; the Sovereign against whom they had rebelled

"And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?"—thus graciously calling him to return, who would otherwise have eternally fled from God. "And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked." Still here is no acknowledgment of his fault; no humiliation for it. But with what astonishing tenderness does God lead him to make that acknowledgment? "And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked?" How camest thou to make this discovery? "Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?" "And the man said, [still unhumbled, yea, indirectly throwing the blame upon God himself,] The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." "And the Lord God [still in order to bring them to repentance] said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done?" Verse 13, "And the woman said, [nakedly declaring the thing as it was,] The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat." "And the Lord God said unto the serpent, [to testify his utter abhorrence of sin, by a lasting monument of his displeasure, in punishing the creature that had been barely the instrument of it,] Thou art cursed above the cattle, and above every beast of the field.—And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Thus, in the midst of judgment, hath God remembered mercy, from the beginning of the world; connecting the grand promise of salvation with the very sentence of condemnation!

4. "Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow, and [or, in] thy conception: in sorrow [or pain] thou shalt bring forth children;"—yea, above any other creature under heaven, which original curse we see is entailed on her latest posterity. "And thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." It seems, the latter part of this sentence is explanatory of the former. Was there, till now, any other inferiority of the woman to the man, than that which we may conceive in one angel to another? "And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it; cursed is the ground for thy sake. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee:"—useless, yea, and hurtful productions; whereas nothing calculated to hurt, or give pain, had, at first, any place in the creation. "And thou shalt eat the herb of the field:"—coarse and vile, compared to the delicious fruits of paradise! "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground: for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

II. 1. Let us now, in the second place, weigh these solemn words, in a more particular manner. "Dust thou art:"—but how fearfully and wonderfully wrought into innumerable fibres, nerves, membranes, muscles, arteries, veins, vessels of various kinds! And how amazingly is this dust connected with water, with inclosed, circulating fluids, diversified a thousand ways, by a thousand tubes and strainers! Yea, and how wonderfully is air impacted into every part, solid, or fluid, of the animal machine; air not elastic, which would tear the machine in pieces, but as fixed as water under the pole! But all this would not avail, were not ethereal fire intimately mixed both with this earth, air, and water. And all these elements are mingled together in the most

exact proportion; so that while the body is in health no one of them predominates, in the least degree, over the others.

2. Such was man, with regard to his corporeal part, as he came out of the hands of his Maker. But since he sinned, he is not only dust, but mortal, corruptible dust. And by sad experience we find, that this "corruptible body presses down the soul." It very frequently hinders the soul in its operations; and, at best, serves it very imperfectly. Yet the soul cannot dispense with its service, imperfect as it is: for an embodied spirit cannot form one thought, but by the mediation of its bodily organs. For thinking is not, as many suppose, the act of a pure spirit; but the act of a spirit connected with a body and playing upon a set of material keys. It cannot possibly, therefore, make any better music, than the nature and state of its instruments allow it. Hence every disorder of the body, especially of the parts more immediately subservient to thinking, lay an almost insuperable bar in the way of its thinking justly. Hence the maxim received in all ages, *Humanum est errare et nescire*. Not ignorance alone, (that belongs, more or less, to every creature in heaven and earth; seeing none is omniscient, none knoweth all things, save the Creator,) but error is entailed on every child of man. Mistake, as well as ignorance, is, in our present state, inseparable from humanity. Every child of man is in a thousand mistakes, and is liable to fresh mistakes every moment. And a mistake in judgment may occasion a mistake in practice; yea, naturally leads thereto.—I mistake, and possibly cannot avoid mistaking, the character of this or that man. I suppose him to be what he is not; to be better or worse than he really is. Upon this wrong supposition I behave wrong to him; that is, more or less affectionately than he deserves. And by the mistake which is occasioned by the defect of my bodily organs, I am naturally led so to do. Such is the present condition of human nature; of a mind dependant on a mortal body. Such is the state entailed on all human spirits, while connected with flesh and blood!

3. "And unto dust thou shalt return." How admirably well has the wise Creator secured the execution of this sentence on all the offspring of Adam! It is true, he was pleased to make one exception from this general rule, in a very early age of the world, in favour of an eminently righteous man. So we read, Gen. v, 23, 24: After Enoch had "walked with God three hundred sixty and five years, he was not; for God took him:"—he exempted him from the sentence passed upon all flesh, and took him alive into heaven. Many ages after, he was pleased to make a second exception; ordering the prophet Elijah to be taken up into heaven, in a chariot of fire,—very probably by a convoy of angels, assuming that appearance. And it is not unlikely, that he saw good to make a third exception, in the person of the beloved disciple. There is transmitted to us a particular account of the apostle John's old age; but we have not any account of his death, and not the least intimation concerning it. Hence we may reasonably suppose that he did not die, but that after he had finished his course, and "walked with God" for about a hundred years, the Lord took him, as he did Enoch; not in so open a manner as he did the prophet Elijah.

4. But setting these two or three instances aside, who has been able, in the course of near six thousand years, to evade the execution of this sentence, passed on Adam and all his posterity? Be men ever so great

masters of the art of healing, can they prevent or heal the gradual decays of nature? Can all their boasted skill heal old age, or hinder dust from returning to dust? Nay, who, among the greatest masters of medicine, has been able to add a century to his own years? Yea, or to protract his own life any considerable space beyond the common period? The days of man, for above three thousand years, (from the time of Moses at least,) have been fixed, by a middling computation, at three score years and ten. How few are there that attain to four score years? Perhaps hardly one in five hundred. So little does the art of man avail against the appointment of God!

5. God has indeed provided for the execution of his own decree, in the very principles of our nature. It is well known, the human body, when it comes into the world, consists of innumerable membranes exquisitely thin, that are filled with circulating fluids, to which the solid parts bear a very small proportion. Into the tubes, composed of these membranes, nourishment must be continually infused; otherwise life cannot continue, but will come to an end almost as soon as it is begun. And suppose this nourishment to be liquid, which, as it flows through those fine canals, continually enlarges them in all their dimensions; yet it contains innumerable solid particles, which continually adhere to the inner surface of the vessels through which they flow; so that in the same proportion as any vessel is enlarged, it is stiffened also. Thus the body grows firmer, as it grows larger, from infancy to manhood. In twenty, five and twenty, or thirty years, it attains its full measure of firmness. Every part of the body is then stiffened to its full degree; as much earth adhering to all the vessels, as gives the solidity they severally need to the nerves, arteries, veins, muscles, in order to exercise their functions in the most perfect manner. For twenty, or, it may be, thirty years following, although more and more particles of earth continually adhere to the inner surface of every vessel in the body, yet the stiffness caused thereby is hardly observable, and occasions little inconvenience. But after sixty years, (more or less according to the natural constitution, and a thousand accidental circumstances,) the change is easily perceived, even at the surface of the body. Wrinkles show the proportion of the fluids to be lessened, as does also the dryness of the skin, through a diminution of the blood and juices, which before moistened and kept it smooth and soft. The extremities of the body grow cold, not only as they are remote from the centre of motion, but as the smaller vessels are filled up, and can no longer admit the circulating fluid. As age increases, fewer and fewer of the vessels are pervious, and capable of transmitting the vital stream; except the larger ones, most of which are lodged within the trunk of the body. In extreme old age, the arteries themselves, the grand instruments of circulation, by the continual apposition of earth, become hard, and, as it were bony, till, having lost the power of contracting themselves, they can no longer propel the blood, even through the largest channels; in consequence of which, death naturally ensues. Thus are the seeds of death sown in our very nature! Thus from the very hour when we first appear on the stage of life, we are travelling towards death: we are preparing, whether we will or no, to return to the dust from whence we came!

6. Let us now take a short review of the whole, as it is delivered with inimitable simplicity; what an unprejudiced person might, even from

hence, infer to be the word of God. In that period of duration which he saw to be most proper, (of which he alone could be the judge, whose eye views the whole possibility of things from everlasting to everlasting,) the Almighty, rising in the greatness of his strength, went forth to create the universe. "In the beginning he created," made out of nothing, "the matter of the heavens and the earth:" (so, Mr. Hutchinson observes, the original words properly signify:) then "the Spirit [or breath] from the Lord," that is, the air, "moved upon the face of the waters." Here were earth, water, air; three of the elements, or component parts of the lower world. "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light." By his omnific word, light, that is, fire, the fourth element, sprang into being. Out of these, variously modified and proportioned to each other, he composed the whole. "The earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed, and the tree yielding fruit after his kind;" and then the various tribes of animals, to inhabit the waters, the air, and the earth. But the very heathen could observe,

Sanctius his animal mentisque capacius altæ
Deerat adhuc!————

There was still wanting a creature of a higher rank, capable of wisdom and holiness. *Natus homo est.* "So God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him!" Mark the emphatical repetition. God did not make him mere matter, a piece of senseless, unintelligent clay; but a spirit, like himself, although clothed with a material vehicle. As such he was endued with understanding; with a will, including various affections; and with liberty, a power of using them in a right or wrong manner, of choosing good or evil. Otherwise, neither his understanding nor his will would have been to any purpose; for he must have been as incapable of virtue or holiness, as the stock of a tree. Adam, in whom all mankind were then contained, freely preferred evil to good. He chose to do his own will, rather than the will of his Creator. He "was not deceived," but knowingly and deliberately rebelled against his Father and his King. In that moment he lost the moral image of God, and, in part, the natural: he commenced unholy, foolish, and unhappy. And "in Adam all died:" he entitled all his posterity to error, guilt, sorrow, fear, pain, diseases, and death.

7. How exactly does matter of fact, do all things round us, even the face of the whole world, agree with this account? Open your eyes! Look around you! See darkness that may be felt; see ignorance and error; see vice in ten thousand forms; see consciousness of guilt, fear, sorrow, shame, remorse, covering the face of the earth! See misery, the daughter of sin. See, on every side, sickness and pain, inhabitants of every nation under heaven; driving on the poor, helpless sons of men, in every age, to the gates of death! So they have done well nigh from the beginning of the world. So they will do, till the consummation of all things.

8. But can the Creator despise the work of his own hands? Surely that is impossible! Hath he not then, seeing he alone is able, provided a remedy for all these evils? Yea, verily he hath! And a sufficient remedy; every way adequate to the disease. He hath fulfilled his word; He hath given "the Seed of the woman to bruise the serpent's head." —"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that

whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." Here is a remedy provided for all our guilt: He "bore all our sins in his body on the tree." And "if any one have sinned, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." And here is a remedy for all our disease, all the corruption of our nature. For God hath also, through the intercession of his Son, given us his Holy Spirit, to renew us both in knowledge, in his natural image;—opening the eyes of our understanding, and enlightening us with all such knowledge as is requisite to our pleasing God;—and also in his moral image, namely, "righteousness and true holiness." And supposing this is done, we know that "all things [will] work together for our good." We know by happy experience, that all natural evils change their nature and turn to good; that sorrow, sickness, pain, will all prove medicines to heal our spiritual sickness. They will all be to our profit; will all tend to our unspeakable advantage; making us more largely "partakers of his holiness," while we remain on earth; adding so many stars to that crown which is reserved in heaven for us.

9. Behold then both the justice and mercy of God!—his *justice* in punishing sin, the sin of him in whose loins we were then all contained, on Adam and his whole posterity;—and his *mercy*, in providing a universal remedy for a universal evil; in appointing the second Adam to die for all who had died in the first; that, "as in Adam all died, so in Christ all [might] be made alive;" that, "as by one man's offence, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, so by the righteousness of one," the free gift might "come upon all, unto justification of life,"—"Justification of *life*," as being connected with the new birth, the beginning of spiritual life, which leads us, through the life of holiness, to life eternal, to glory

10. And it should be particularly observed, that "where sin abounded, grace does much more abound." For not as the condemnation, so is the free gift; but we may gain infinitely more than we have lost. We may now attain both higher degrees of holiness, and higher degrees of glory, than it would have been possible for us to attain. If Adam had not sinned, the Son of God had not died: consequently that amazing instance of the love of God to man never had existed, which has, in all ages, excited the highest joy, and love, and gratitude from his children. We might have loved God the Creator, God the Preserver, God the Governor; but there would have been no place for love to God the Redeemer! This could have had no being. The highest glory and joy of saints on earth, and saints in heaven, Christ crucified, had been wanting. We could not then have praised Him, that, thinking it no robbery to be equal with God, yet emptied himself, took upon him the form of a servant, and was obedient to death, even the death of the cross! This is now the noblest theme of all the children of God on earth; yea, we need not scruple to affirm, even of angels, and archangels, and all the company of heaven.

"Hallelujah," they cry,
"To the King of the sky,
To the great everlasting I AM;
To the Lamb that was slain,
And liveth again
Hallelujah to God and the Lamb!"

Sermon LXIII.—*On Predestination.*

"Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son:—whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified," Rom. viii, 29, 30.

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1. "Our beloved brother Paul," says St. Peter, "according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction," 2 Pet. iii, 15, 16.

2. It is not improbable, that among those things spoken by St. Paul which are hard to be understood, the apostle Peter might place what he speaks on this subject, in the eighth and ninth chapters of his epistle to the Romans. And it is certain not only the unlearned, but many of the most learned men in the world, and not the "unstable" only, but many who seemed to be well established in the truths of the gospel, have, for several centuries, "wrested" these passages "to their own destruction."

3. "Hard to be understood," we may well allow them to be, when we consider, how men of the strongest understanding, improved by all the advantages of education, have continually differed in judgment concerning them. And this very consideration that there is so wide a difference upon the head, between men of the greatest learning, sense, and piety, one might imagine would make all who now speak upon the subject exceedingly wary and self diffident. But I know not how it is, that just the reverse is observed in every part of the Christian world. No writers upon earth appear more positive, than those who write on this difficult subject. Nay, the same men, who, writing upon any other subject, are remarkably modest and humble, on this alone lay aside all self distrust,

"And speak *ex cathedrâ* infallible."

This is peculiarly observable of almost all those who assert the absolute decrees. But surely it is possible to avoid this: whatever we propose may be proposed with modesty, and with deference to those wise and good men who are of a contrary opinion; and the rather, because so much has been said already on every part of the question, so many volumes have been written, that it is scarcely possible to say any thing which has not been said before. All I would offer at present, not to the lovers of contention, but to men of piety and candour, are a few short hints, which perhaps may cast some light on the text above recited.

4. The more frequently and carefully I have considered it, the more I have been inclined to think, that the apostle is not here (as many have supposed) describing a chain of causes and effects; (this does not seem to have entered into his heart;) but simply showing *the method in which God works; the order* in which the several branches of salvation constantly follow each other. And this, I apprehend, will be clear to any serious and impartial inquirer, surveying the work of God either forwards or backwards; either from the beginning to the end, or from the end to the beginning.

5. And first, let us look forward on the whole work of God, in the salvation of man; considering it from the beginning, the first point, till it terminates in glory. The first point is the foreknowledge of God God *foreknew* those in every nation, who would believe, from the beginning of the world to the consummation of all things. But in order to throw light upon this dark question, it should be well observed, that when we speak of God's foreknowledge we do not speak according to the nature of things, but after the manner of men. For if we speak properly, there is no such thing as either foreknowledge or after knowledge in God. All time, or rather all eternity, (for time is only that small fragment of eternity which is allotted to the children of men,) being present to him at once, he does not know one thing before another, or one thing after another; but sees all things in one point of view, from ever asting to everlasting. As all time, with every thing that exists therein, is present with him at once, so he sees at once, whatever was, is, or will be, to the end of time. But observe: we must not think they are, because he knows them. No; he knows them, because they are. Just as I (if one may be allowed to compare the things of men with the deep things of God) now know the sun shines: yet the sun does not shine because I know it; but I know it, because he shines. My knowledge supposes the sun to shine; but does not in any wise cause it. In like manner, God knows that man sins, for he knows all things: yet we do not sin because he knows it, but he knows it because we sin; and his knowledge supposes our sin, but does not in any wise cause it. In a word, God, looking on all ages, from the creation to the consummation, as a moment, and seeing at once whatever is in the hearts of all the children of men, knows every one that does or does not believe, in every age or nation. Yet what he knows, whether faith or unbelief, is in no wise caused by his knowledge. Men are as free in believing, or not believing, as if he did not know it at all.

6. Indeed if man were not free, he could not be accountable either for his thoughts, words, or actions. If he were not free, he would not be capable either of reward or punishment; he would be incapable either of virtue or vice, of being either morally good or bad. If he had no more freedom than the sun, the moon, or the stars, he would be no more accountable than they. On supposition that he had no more freedom than they, the stones of the earth would be as capable of reward, and as liable to punishment, as man: one would be as accountable as the other. Yea, and it would be as absurd to ascribe either virtue or vice to him, as to ascribe it to the stock of a tree.

7. But to proceed: "whom he did foreknow, them he did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." This is the second step: (to speak after the manner of men: for in fact, there is nothing *before* or *after* in God:) in other words, God decrees, from everlasting to everlasting, that all who believe in the Son of his love, shall be conformed to his image; shall be saved from all inward and outward sin, into all inward and outward holiness. Accordingly, it is a plain, undeniable fact, all who truly believe in the name of the Son of God do now "receive the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls;" and this in virtue of the unchangeable, irreversible, irresistible decree of God,—"He that believeth shall be saved;" "he that believeth not shall be damned."

8. "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called." This is the third step: (still remembering that we speak after the manner of men,) to express it a little more largely: according to his fixed decree, that believers shall be saved; those whom he foreknows as such, he calls both outwardly and inwardly,—*outwardly* by the word of his grace, and *inwardly* by his Spirit. This inward application of his word to the heart, seems to be what some term "effectual calling:" and it implies, the calling them children of God; the accepting them "in the Beloved;" the justifying them freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ."

9. "Whom he called, them he justified." This is the fourth step. It is generally allowed, that the word "justified" here is taken in a peculiar sense; that it means he made them just or righteous. He executed his decree, "conforming them to the image of his Son;" or, as we usually speak, sanctified them.

10. It remains, "whom he justified, them he also glorified." This is the last step. Having made them "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light;" he gives them "the kingdom which was prepared for them before the world began." This is the order wherein, "according to the counsel of his will," the plan he has laid down from eternity, he saves those whom he foreknew; the true believers in every place and generation.

11. The same great work of salvation by faith, according to the foreknowledge and decree of God, may appear in a still clearer light, if we view it backward, from the end to the beginning. Suppose then you stood with the "great multitude which no man can number, out of every nation, and tongue, and kindred and people," who "give praise unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the lamb for ever and ever;" you would not find one among them all that were entered into glory, who was not a witness of that great truth, "without holiness no man shall see the Lord;" not one of all that innumerable company, who was not sanctified before he was glorified. By holiness he was prepared for glory; according to the invariable will of the Lord, that the crown, purchased by the blood of his Son, should be given to none but those who are renewed by his Spirit. He is become "the author of eternal salvation," only "to them that obey him;" that obey him inwardly and outwardly; that are holy in heart, and holy in all manner of conversation.

12. And could you take a view of all those upon earth who are now sanctified, you would find not one of these had been sanctified till after he was called. He was first called, not only with an outward call, by the word and the messengers of God, but likewise with an inward call, by his Spirit applying his word enabling him to believe in the only begotten Son of God, and bearing testimony with his spirit that he was a child of God. And it was by this very means they were all sanctified It was by a sense of the love of God shed abroad in his heart, that every one of them was enabled to love God. Loving God, he loved his neighbour as himself, and had power to walk in all his commandments blameless. This is a rule which admits of no exception. God calls a sinner his own, that is, justifies him, before he sanctifies. And by this very thing, the consciousness of his favour, he works in him that grateful, filial affection, from which spring every good temper and word and work.

13. And who are they that are thus called of God, but those whom he had before predestinated, or decreed to "conform to the image of his Son?" This decree (still speaking after the manner of men) precedes every man's calling: every believer was predestinated before he was called. For God calls none, but "according to the counsel of his will," according to this προθεσις, or plan of acting, which he had laid down before the foundation of the world.

14. Once more: as all that are called were predestinated, so all whom God has predestinated he foreknew. He knew, he saw them as believers, and as such predestinated them to salvation, according to his eternal decree:—"He that believeth shall be saved." Thus we see the whole process of the work of God, from the end to the beginning. Who are glorified? None but those who were first sanctified. Who are sanctified? None but those who were first justified. Who are justified? None but those who were first predestinated. Who are predestinated? None but those whom God foreknew as believers. Thus the purpose and word of God stand unshaken as the pillars of heaven:—"He that believeth shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." And thus God is clear from the blood of all men; since whoever perishes, perishes by his own act and deed. "They will not come unto me," says the Saviour of men; and "there is no salvation in any other." They "will not believe;" and there is no other way either to present or eternal salvation. Therefore their blood is upon their own head; and God is still "justified in his saying," that he "willeth all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of his truth."

15. The sum of all is this: the almighty, all wise God, sees and knows, from everlasting to everlasting, all that is, that was, and that is to come, through one eternal now. With him nothing is either past or future, but all things equally present. He has, therefore, if we speak according to the truth of things, no foreknowledge, no after knowledge. This would be ill consistent with the apostle's words, "With him is no variableness or shadow of turning;" and with the account he gives of himself by the prophet, "I the Lord change not." Yet when he speaks to us, knowing whereof we are made, knowing the scantiness of our understanding, he lets himself down to our capacity, and speaks of himself after the manner of men. Thus, in condescension to our weakness, he speaks of his own purpose, counsel, plan, foreknowledge. Not that God has any need of counsel, of purpose, or of planning his work beforehand. Far be it from us to impute these to the Most High; to measure him by ourselves! It is merely in compassion to us, that he speaks thus of himself, as foreknowing the things in heaven or earth, and as predestinating or foreordaining them. But can we posssibly imagine that these expressions are to be taken literally? To one who was so gross in his conceptions, might he not say, "Thinkest thou I am such a one as thyself?" Not so: as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than thy ways. I know, decree, work, in such a manner as it is not possible for thee to conceive: but to give thee some faint, glimmering knowledge of my ways, I use the language of men, and suit myself to thy apprehensions, in this thy infant state of existence

16. What is it then that we learn from this whole account? It is this, and no more: 1, God knows all believers; 2, wills that they

should be saved from sin; 3, to that end justifies them; 4, sanctifies; and 5, takes them to glory.

Oh that men would praise the Lord for this his goodness; and that they would be content with this plain account of it, and not endeavour to wade into those mysteries which are too deep for angels to fathom!

SERMON LXIV.—*God's Love to Fallen Man.*

"Not as the offence, so also is the free gift," Romans v, 15.

1. How exceeding common, and how bitter, is the outcry against our first parent, for the mischief which he not only brought upon himself, but entailed upon his latest posterity! It was by his wilful rebellion against God, "that sin entered into the world." "By one man's disobedience," as the apostle observes, *the many*, οι πολλοι, as many as were then in the loins of their forefather, "were made," or constituted, "sinners:" not only deprived of the favour of God, but also of his image, of all virtue, righteousness, and true holiness; and sunk, partly into the image of the devil,—in pride, malice, and all other diabolical tempers,—partly into the image of the brute, being fallen under the dominion of brutal passions and grovelling appetites. Hence also death entered into the world, with all his forerunners and attendants; pain, sickness, and a whole train of uneasy, as well as unholy passions and tempers.

2. "*For all this we may thank Adam*," has echoed down from generation to generation. The self-same charge has been repeated in every age and every nation, where the oracles of God are known; in which alone this grand and important event has been discovered to the children of men. Has not *your* heart, and probably *your* lips too, joined in the general charge? How few are there of those who believe the scriptural relation of the fall of man, that have not entertained the same thought concerning our first parent? Severely condemning him that, through wilful disobedience to the sole command of his Creator,

"Brought death into the world, and all our woe."

3. Nay, it were well if the charge rested here: but it is certain it does not. It cannot be denied, that it frequently glances from Adam to his Creator. Have not thousands, even of those that are called Christians, taken the liberty to call his mercy, if not his justice also, into question, on this very account? Some indeed have done this a little more modestly, in an oblique and indirect manner; but others have thrown aside the mask, and asked, "Did not God foresee that Adam would abuse his liberty? And did he not know the baneful consequences which this must naturally have on all his posterity? And why then did he permit that disobedience? Was it not easy for the Almighty to have prevented it?"—He certainly did foresee the whole. This cannot be denied. For "known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world:" rather from all eternity, as the words απ' αιωνος properly signify. And it was undoubtedly in his power to prevent it; for he hath all power both in heaven and earth. But it was known to him at the same time, that it was best upon the whole not to prevent it. He knew, that "not as the transgression, so is the free gift;"

that the evil resulting from the former was not as the good resulting from the latter,—not worthy to be compared with it. He saw that to permit the fall of the first man was far best for mankind in general; that abundantly more good than evil would accrue to the posterity of Adam by his fall; that if "sin abounded" thereby, over all the earth, yet grace "would much more abound;" yea, and that to every individual of the human race, unless it was his own choice.

4. It is exceeding strange that hardly any thing has been written, or at least published on this subject; nay, that it has been so little weighed or understood by the generality of Christians; especially considering, that it is not a matter of mere curiosity, but a truth of the deepest importance; it being impossible, on any other principle,

> "To assert a gracious providence,
> And justify the ways of God with men;"

and considering withal, how plain this important truth is, to all sensible and candid inquirers. May the Lover of men open the eyes of our understanding, to perceive clearly, that by the fall of Adam mankind in general have gained a capacity,

First, of being more holy and happy on earth; and,

Secondly, of being more happy in heaven, than otherwise they could have been.

1. And, first, Mankind in general have gained by the fall of Adam, a capacity of attaining more holiness and happiness on earth, than it would have been possible for them to attain if Adam had not fallen For if Adam had not fallen, Christ had not died. Nothing can be more clear than this; nothing more undeniable: the more thoroughly we consider the point, the more deeply shall we be convinced of it. Unless all the partakers of human nature had received that deadly wound in Adam, it would not have been needful for the Son of God to take our nature upon him. Do you not see that this was the very ground of his coming into the world? "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin: and thus death passed upon all," through him in whom all men sinned, Rom. v, 12. Was it not to remedy this very thing, that "the Word was made flesh," that "as in Adam all died, so in Christ all [might] be made alive?" Unless then many had been made sinners by the disobedience of one; by the obedience of one, many would not have been made righteous; ver. 19: so there would have been no room for that amazing display of the Son of God's love to mankind: there would have been no occasion for his being "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." It could not then have been said, to the astonishment of all the hosts of heaven, "God so loved the world," yea, the ungodly world, which had no thought or desire of returning to him, "that he gave his Son" out of his bosom, his only-begotten Son, "to the end that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Neither could we then have said, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself;" or that he "made him to be sin," that is, a *sin offering*, "for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God through him." There would have been no such occasion for such "an Advocate with the Father," as "Jesus Christ the Righteous;" neither for his appearing "at the right hand of God, to make intercession for us"

2. What is the necessary consequence of this? It is this: There could then have been no such thing as faith in God thus loving the world, giving his only Son for us men, and for our salvation. There could have been no such thing as faith in the Son of God, as "loving us and giving himself for us." There could have been no faith in the Spirit of God, as renewing the image of God in our hearts, as raising us from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness. Indeed the whole privilege of justification by faith could have had no existence; there could have been no redemption in the blood of Christ; neither could Christ have been "made of God unto us," either "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification," or "redemption."

3. And the same grand blank which was in our faith, must likewise have been in our love. We might have loved the Author of our being, the Father of angels and men, as our Creator and Preserver: we might have said, "Oh Lord our Governor, how excellent is thy name in all the earth?"—but we could not have loved him under the nearest and dearest relation, "as delivering up his Son for us all." We might have loved the Son of God, as being "the brightness of his Father's glory, the express image of his Person;" (although this ground seems to belong rather to the inhabitants of heaven than earth;) but we could not have loved him as "bearing our sins in his own body on the tree," and "by that one oblation of himself once offered, making a full sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world." We could not have been "made conformable to his death," nor have known "the power of his resurrection." We could not have loved the Holy Ghost, as revealing to us the Father and the Son; as opening the eyes of our understanding; bringing us out of darkness into his marvellous light; renewing the image of God in our soul, and sealing us unto the day of redemption. So that, in truth, what is now "in the sight of God even the Father," not of fallible men, "pure religion and undefiled," would then have had no being; inasmuch as it wholly depends on those grand principles;—"By grace ye are saved through faith;" and "Jesus Christ is of God made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

4. We see then what unspeakable advantage we derive from the fall of our first parent, with regard to faith;—faith both in God the Father, who spared not his own Son, his only Son, but "wounded him for our transgressions," and "bruised him for our iniquities;" and in God the Son, who poured out his soul for us transgressors, and washed us in his own blood. We see what advantage we derive therefrom, with regard to the love of God; both of God the Father and God the Son. The chief ground of this love, as long as we remain in the body, is plainly declared by the apostle: "We love him, because he first loved us." But the greatest instance of his love had never been given, if Adam had not fallen.

5. And as our faith, both in God the Father and the Son, receives an unspeakable increase, if not its very being, from this grand event, as does also our love both of the Father and the Son; so does the love of our neighbour also, our benevolence to all mankind, which cannot but increase in the same proportion with our faith and love of God. For who does not apprehend the force of that inference drawn by the loving apostle: "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one ano-

ther." If God *SO* loved us:—observe, the stress of the argument lies on this very point; *SO loved us*, as to deliver up his only Son to die a cursed death for our salvation. Beloved, what manner of love is this, wherewith God hath loved us; so as to give his *only Son*, in glory equal with the Father, in majesty co-eternal? What manner of love is this wherewith the only-begotten Son of God hath loved us, as to *empty himself*, as far as possible, of his eternal Godhead; as to divest himself of that glory, which he had with the Father before the world began; as to take upon him the form of a servant, being found in fashion as a man; and then to humble himself still farther, "being obedient unto death, even the death of the cross!" If God SO loved us, how ought we to love one another? But this motive to brotherly love had been totally wanting, if Adam had not fallen. Consequently we could not then have loved one another in so high a degree as we may now. Nor could there have been that height and depth in the command of our blessed Lord, "As I have loved you, so love one another."

6. Such gainers may we be by Adam's fall, with regard both to the love of God and of our neighbour. But there is another grand point, which, though little adverted to, deserves our deepest consideration. By that one act of our first parent, not only "sin entered into the world," but pain also, and was alike entailed on his whole posterity. And herein appeared, not only the justice, but the unspeakable goodness of God. For how much good does he continually bring out of this evil! How much holiness and happiness out of pain!

7. How innumerable are the benefits which God conveys to the children of men through the channel of sufferings!—so that it might well be said, "What are termed afflictions in the language of men, are in the language of God styled blessings." Indeed had there been no suffering in the world, a considerable part of religion, yea, and in some respects, the most excellent part, could have had no place therein; since the very existence of it depends on our suffering; so that had there been no pain, it could have had no being. Upon this foundation, even our suffering, it is evident all our passive graces are built; yea, the noblest of all Christian graces, *Love enduring all things*. Here is the ground for resignation to God, enabling us to say from the heart, in every trying hour, "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good:" "Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?" And what a glorious spectacle is this! Did it not constrain even a heathen to cry out, "*Ecce spectaculum Deo dignum!*" See a sight worthy of God; a good man struggling with adversity, and superior to it. Here is the ground for confidence in God, both with regard to what we feel, and with regard to what we should fear, were it not that our soul is calmly stayed on him. What room could there be for trust in God, if there was no such thing as pain or danger? Who might not say then, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" It is by sufferings that our faith is tried, and, therefore, made more acceptable to God. It is in the day of trouble that we have occasion to say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." And this is well pleasing to God, that we should own him in the face of danger; in defiance of sorrow, sickness, pain, or death.

8. Again: Had there been neither natural nor moral evil in the world, what must have become of patience, meekness, gentleness, long suffer

ing? It is manifest they could have had no being; seeing all these have evil for their object. If, therefore, evil had never entered into the world, neither could these have had any place in it. For who could have returned good for evil, had there been no evil doer in the universe? How had it been possible, on that supposition, to "overcome evil with good?" Will you say, "But all these graces might have been divinely infused into the hearts of men?" Undoubtedly they might: but if they had, there would have been no use or exercise for them. Whereas in the present state of things we can never long want occasion to exercise them: and the more they are exercised, the more all our graces are strengthened and increased. And in the same proportion as our resignation, our confidence in God, our patience and fortitude, our meekness, gentleness, and long suffering, together with our faith and love of God and man increase, must our happiness increase, even in the present world.

9. Yet again: As God's permission of Adam's fall gave all his posterity a thousand opportunities of suffering, and thereby of exercising all those passive graces which increase both their holiness and happiness; so it gives them opportunities of doing good in numberless instances; of exercising themselves in various good works, which otherwise could have had no being. And what exertions of benevolence, of compassion, of godlike mercy, had then been totally prevented? Who could then have said to the lover of men,

> "Thy mind throughout my life be shown,
> While listening to the wretch's cry,
> The widow's or the orphan's groan,
> On mercy's wings I swiftly fly,
> The poor and needy to relieve;
> Myself, my all for them to give?"

It is the just observation of a benevolent man,

> "All worldly joys are less,
> Than that one joy of doing kindnesses."

Surely in keeping this commandment, if no other, there is great reward. "As we have time, let us do good unto all men:" good of every kind, and in every degree. Accordingly the more good we do, (other circumstances being equal,) the happier we shall be. The more we deal our bread to the hungry, and cover the naked with garments, the more we relieve the stranger, and visit them that are sick or in prison, the more kind offices we do to those that groan under the various evils of human life; the more comfort we receive even in the present world, the greater the recompense we have in our own bosom.

10. To sum up what has been said under this head: as the more holy we are upon earth, the more happy we must be; (seeing there is an inseparable connection between holiness and happiness;) as the more good we do to others, the more of present reward redounds into our own bosom; even as our sufferings for God lead us to rejoice in him "with joy unspeakable and full of glory;" therefore, the fall of Adam,—first, by giving us an opportunity of being far more holy, secondly, by giving us the occasions of doing innumerable good works, which otherwise could not have been done, and, thirdly, by putting it into our power to suffer for God, whereby "the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon us,"—may be of such advantage to the children of

men, even in the present life, as they will not thoroughly comprehend till they attain life everlasting.

11. It is then we shall be enabled fully to comprehend, not only the advantages which accrue at the present time to the sons of men by the fall of their first parent, but the infinitely greater advantages which they may reap from it in eternity. In order to form some conception of this, we may remember the observation of the apostle: as "one star differeth from another star in glory, so also is the resurrection of the dead." The most glorious stars will undoubtedly be those who are the most holy, who bear most of that image of God wherein they were created; the next in glory to these will be those who have been most abundant in good works; and next to them, those that have suffered most, according to the will of God. But what advantages, in every one of these respects, will the children of God receive in heaven, by God's permitting the introduction of pain upon earth in consequence of sin? By occasion of this they attained many holy tempers, which otherwise could have had no being;—resignation to God; confidence in him, in times of trouble and danger; patience, meekness, gentleness, long suffering, and the whole train of passive virtues: and on account of this superior holiness, they will then enjoy superior happiness. Again: every one will then "receive his own reward, according to his own labour:" every individual will be "rewarded according to his work." But the fall gave rise to innumerable good works, which could otherwise never have existed; such as ministering to the necessities of saints; yea, relieving the distressed in every kind: and hereby innumerable stars will be added to their eternal crown. Yet again: there will be an abundant reward in heaven for *suffering*, as well as for *doing* the will of God: "These light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Therefore that event, which occasioned the entrance of suffering into the world, has thereby occasioned to all the children of God an increase of glory to all eternity. For although the sufferings themselves will be at an end; although

> "The pain of life shall then be o'er,
> The anguish and distracting care;
> There sighing grief shall weep no more:
> And sin shall never enter there;"—

yet the joys occasioned thereby shall never end, but flow at God's right hand for evermore.

12. There is one advantage more that we reap from Adam's fall, which is not unworthy our attention. Unless in Adam all had died, being in the loins of their first parent, every descendant of Adam, every child of man, must have personally answered for himself to God. It seems to be a necessary consequence of this, that if he had once fallen, once violated any command of God, there would have been no possibility of his rising again; there was no help, but he must have perished without remedy. For that covenant knew not to show mercy: the word was, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Now who would not rather be on the footing he is now; under a covenant of mercy? Who would wish to hazard a whole eternity upon one stake? Is it not infinitely more desirable, to be in a state wherein, though encompassed with infirmities, yet we do not run such a desperate risk, but if we fall, we may rise again? Wherein we may say,

"My trespass is grown up to heaven:
But far above the skies,
In Christ abundantly forgiven,
I see thy mercies rise!"

13. *In Christ!* Let me entreat every serious person, once more to fix his attention here. All that has been said, all that can be said, on these subjects, centres in this point: the fall of Adam produced the death of Christ. Hear, oh heavens, and give ear, oh earth! Yea,

"Let earth and heaven agree,
Angels and men be join'd,
To celebrate with me
The Saviour of mankind;
T' adore the all-atoning Lamb,
And bless the sound of JESUS' name!"

If God had prevented the fall of man, "the Word" had never been "made flesh;" nor had we ever "seen his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father." Those mysteries never had been displayed, "which the" very "angels desire to look into." Methinks this consideration swallows up all the rest, and should never be out of our thoughts. Unless "by one man judgment had come upon all men to condemnation," neither angels nor men could ever have known "the unsearchable riches of Christ."

14. See then, upon the whole, how little reason we have to repine at the fall of our first parent; since herefrom we may derive such unspeakable advantages, both in time and eternity. See how small pretence there is for questioning the mercy of God, in permitting that event to take place; since therein mercy, by infinite degrees, rejoices over judgment. Where then is the man that presumes to blame God, for not preventing Adam's sin? Should we not rather bless him from the ground of the heart, for therein laying the grand scheme of man's redemption, and making way for that glorious manifestation of his wisdom, holiness, justice, and mercy? If indeed God had decreed, before the foundation of the world, that millions of men should dwell in everlasting burnings, because Adam sinned hundreds or thousands of years before they had a being; I know not who could thank him for this, unless the devil and his angels: seeing, on this supposition, all those millions of unhappy spirits would be plunged into hell by Adam's sin, without any possible advantage from it. But, blessed be God, this is not the case. Such a decree never existed. On the contrary, every one born of a woman may be an unspeakable gainer thereby: and none ever was or can be a loser, but by his own choice.

15. We see here a full answer to that plausible account of the origin of evil, published to the world some years since, and supposed to be unanswerable: that "it necessarily resulted from the nature of matter, which God was not able to alter." It is very kind in this sweet tongued orator to make an excuse for God! But there is really no occasion for it: God hath answered for himself. He made man in his own image; a spirit endued with understanding and liberty. Man, abusing that liberty, produced evil; brought sin and pain into the world. This God permitted, in order to a fuller manifestation of his wisdom, justice, and mercy; by bestowing on all who would receive it an infinitely greater happiness, than they could possibly have attained if Adam had not fallen.

16. "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" Although a thousand particulars of "his judgments, and of

his ways, are unsearchable" to us, and past our finding out; yet may we discern the general scheme, running through time into eternity. "According to the counsel of his own will," the plan he had laid before the foundation of the world, he created the parent of all mankind in his own image; and he permitted all men to be made sinners, by the disobedience of this one man, that by the obedience of one, all who receive the free gift, may be infinitely holier and happier to all eternity!

SERMON LXV.—*The General Deliverance.*

"The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.

"For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him that subjected it:

"Yet in hope that the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

"For we know that the whole creation groaneth, and travaileth in pain together until now," Rom. viii, 19–22.

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1. NOTHING is more sure, than that as "the Lord is loving to every man," so "his mercy is over all his works;" all that have sense, all that are capable of pleasure or pain, of happiness or misery. In consequence of this, "He openeth his hand, and filleth all things living with plenteousness. He prepareth food for cattle," as well as "herbs for the children of men." He provideth for the fowls of the air, "feeding the young ravens when they cry unto him." "He sendeth the springs into the rivers, that run among the hills," to "give drink to every beast of the field," and that even "the wild asses may quench their thirst." And, suitably to this, he directs us to be tender of even the meaner creatures; to show mercy to these also. "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn:"—a custom which is observed in the eastern countries even to this day. And this is by no means contradicted by St. Paul's question: "Doth God take care for oxen?" Without doubt he does. We cannot deny it, without flatly contradicting his word. The plain meaning of the apostle is, Is this all that is implied in the text? Hath it not a farther meaning? Does it not teach us, We are to feed the bodies of those whom we desire to feed our souls? Meantime it is certain, God "giveth grass for the cattle," as well as "herbs for the use of men."

2. But how are these scriptures reconcilable to the present state of things? How are they consistent with what we daily see round about us, in every part of the creation? If the Creator and Father of every living thing is rich in mercy towards all; if he does not overlook or despise any of the works of his own hands; if he wills even the meanest of them to be happy, according to their degree; how comes it to pass, that such a complication of evils oppresses, yea, overwhelms them? How is it that misery of all kinds overspreads the face of the earth? This is a question which has puzzled the wisest philosophers in all ages: and it cannot be answered without having recourse to the oracles of God. But taking these for our guide, we may inquire,

I. What was the original state of the brute creation?

II. In what state is it at present? And,

III. In what state will it be at the manifestation of the children of God?

I. 1. We may inquire, in the first place, what was the original state of the brute creation? And may not we learn this, even from the place which was assigned them; namely, the garden of God? All the beasts of the field, and all the fowls of the air, were with Adam in paradise. And there is no question but their state was suited to their place: it was paradisiacal; perfectly happy. Undoubtedly it bore a near resemblance to the state of man himself. By taking, therefore, a short view of the one, we may conceive the other. Now "man was made in the image of God." But "God is a Spirit:" so therefore was man: (only that spirit being designed to dwell on earth was lodged in an earthly tabernacle.) As such, he had an innate principle of self motion. And so, t seems, has every spirit in the universe; this being the proper distinguishing difference between spirit and matter, which is totally, essentially passive and inactive, as appears from a thousand experiments. He was, after the likeness of his Creator, endued with understanding; a capacity of apprehending whatever objects were brought before it, and of judging concerning them. He was endued with a will, exerting itself in various affections and passions; and, lastly, with liberty, or freedom of choice; without which all the rest would have been in vain, and he would have been no more capable of serving his Creator than a piece of earth or marble; he would been as incapable of vice or virtue, as any part of the inanimate creation. In these, in the power of self motion, understanding, will, and liberty, the natural image of God consisted.

2. How far his power of self motion then extended, it is impossible for us to determine. It is probable, that he had a far higher degree both of swiftness and strength, than any of his posterity ever had, and much less any of the lower creatures. It is certain, he had such strength of understanding as no man ever since had. His understanding was perfect in its kind: capable of apprehending all things clearly, and judging concerning them according to truth, without any mixture of error. His will had no wrong bias of any sort; but all his passions and affections were regular, being steadily and uniformly guided by the dictates of his unerring understanding; embracing nothing but good, and every good in proportion to its degree of intrinsic goodness. His liberty likewise was wholly guided by his understanding: he chose, or refused, according to its direction. Above all, (which was his highest excellence, far more valuable than all the rest put together,) he was a creature capable of God; capable of knowing, loving, and obeying his Creator. And, in fact, he did know God, did unfeignedly love, and uniformly obey him. This was the supreme perfection of man; (as it is of all intelligent beings;) the continually seeing, and loving, and obeying the Father of the spirits of all flesh. From this right state, and right use, of all his faculties, his happiness naturally flowed. In this the essence of his happiness consisted; but it was increased by all the things that were round about him. He saw, with unspeakable pleasure, the order, the beauty, the harmony, of all the creatures; of all animated, all inanimate nature; the serenity of the skies; the sun walking in brightness; the sweetly variegated clothing of the earth; the trees, the fruits, the flowers,

'And liquid lapse of murmuring streams."

Nor was this pleasure interrupted by evil of any kind. It had no alloy of sorrow or pain, whether of body or mind. For while he was innocent he was impassive; incapable of suffering. Nothing could stain his purity of joy. And, to crown all, he was immortal.

3. To this creature, endued with all these excellent faculties, thus qualified for his high charge, God said, "Have thou dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth," Gen. i, 28. And so the Psalmist: "Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands: thou hast put all things under his feet: all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas," Psa. viii, 6, &c. So that man was God's vicegerent upon earth, the prince and governor of this lower world; and all the blessings of God flowed through him to the inferior creatures. Man was the channel of conveyance between his Creator, and the whole brute creation

4. But what blessings were those that were then conveyed through man, to the lower creatures? What was the original state of the brute creatures, when they were first created? This deserves a more attentive consideration than has been usually given it. It is certain these, as well as man, had an innate principle of self motion; and that, at least, in as high a degree as they enjoy it at this day. Again: They were endued with a degree of understanding; not less than that they are possessed of now. They had also a will, including various passions which, likewise, they still enjoy: and they had liberty; a power of choice; a degree of which is still found in every living creature. Nor can we doubt, but their understanding too was, in the beginning, perfect in its kind. Their passions and affections were regular, and their choice always guided by their understanding.

5. What then is the barrier between men and brutes? The line which they cannot pass? It was not reason. Set aside that ambiguous term: exchange it for the plain word, understanding: and who can deny that brutes have this? We may as well deny that they have sight or hearing. But it is this: man is capable of God; the inferior creatures are not. We have no ground to believe, that they are, in any degree, capable of knowing, loving, or obeying God. This is the specific difference between man and brute; the great gulf which they cannot pass over. And as a loving obedience to God was the perfection of men, so a loving obedience to man was the perfection of brutes. And as long as they continued in this, they were happy after their kind; happy in the right state and the right use of their respective faculties. Yea, and so long they had some shadowy resemblance of even moral goodness. For they had gratitude to man for benefits received, and a reverence for him They had likewise a kind of benevolence to each other, unmixed with any contrary temper. How beautiful many of them were, we may conjecture from that which still remains; and that not only in the noblest creatures, but in those of the lowest order. And they were all surrounded, not only with plenteous food, but with every thing that could give them pleasure; pleasure unmixed with pain; for pain was not yet; it had not entered into paradise. And they too were immortal: for "God made not death; neither hath he pleasure in the death of any living."

6. How true then is that word, "God saw every thing that he had made: and, behold, it was very good." But how far is this from being the present case! In what a condition is the whole lower world!—to say nothing of inanimate nature, wherein all the elements seem to be out of course, and by turns to fight against man. Since man rebelled against his Maker, in what a state is all animated nature! Well might the apostle say of this; "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain until now." This directly refers to the brute creation In what state this is at present we are now to consider.

II. 1. As all the blessings of God in paradise flowed through man to the inferior creatures; as man was the great channel of communication between the Creator and the whole brute creation; so when man made himself incapable of transmitting those blessings, that communication was necessarily cut off. The intercourse between God and the inferior creatures being stopped, those blessings could no longer flow in upon them. And then it was that "the creature," every creature, "was subjected to vanity," to sorrow; to pain of every kind, to all manner of evils; not, indeed, "willingly," not by its own choice, not by any act or deed of its own. but "by reason of him that subjected it," by the wise permission of God, determining to draw eternal good out of this temporary evil.

2. But in what respect was "the creature," every creature, then "made subject to vanity?" What did the meaner creatures suffer, when man rebelled against God? It is probable they sustained much loss, even in the lower faculties; their vigour, strength, and swiftness. But undoubtedly they suffered far more in their understanding, more than we can easily conceive. Perhaps insects and worms had then as much understanding as the most intelligent brutes have now: whereas millions of creatures have, at present, little more understanding than the earth on which they crawl, or the rock to which they adhere. They suffered still more in their will, in their passions; which were then variously distorted, and frequently set in flat opposition to the little understanding that was left them. Their liberty likewise was greatly impaired; yea, in many cases, totally destroyed. They are still utterly enslaved to irrational appetites, which have the full dominion over them. The very foundations of their nature are out of course; are turned upside down. As man is deprived of *his* perfection, his loving obedience to God; so brutes are deprived of *their* perfection, their loving obedience to man. The far greater part of them flee from him; studiously avoid his hated presence. The most of the rest set him at open defiance; yea, destroy him, if it be in their power. A few only, those we commonly term domestic animals, retain more or less of their original disposition, (through the mercy of God,) love him still, and pay obedience to him.

3. Setting these few aside, how little shadow of good, of gratitude, of benevolence, of any right temper, is now to be found in any part of the brute creation! On the contrary, what savage fierceness, what unrelenting cruelty, are invariably observed in thousands of creatures; yea, is inseparable from their natures! Is it only the lion, the tiger, the wolf, among the inhabitants of the forests and plains,—the shark, and a few more voracious monsters, among the inhabitants of the waters,—or the eagle, among birds,—that tears the flesh, sucks the blood, and

crushes the bones of their helpless fellow creatures? Nay; the harmless fly, the laborious ant, the painted butterfly, are treated in the same merciless manner, even by the innocent songsters of the grove! The innumerable tribes of poor insects are continually devoured by them. And whereas there is but a small number, comparatively, of beasts of prey on the earth, it is quite otherwise in the liquid element. There are but few inhabitants of the waters, whether of the sea, or of the rivers, which do not devour whatsoever they can master: yea, they exceed herein all the beasts of the forest, and all the birds of prey. For none of these have been ever observed to prey upon their own species;

Sævis inter se convenit ursis:
Even savage bears will not each other tear.

But the water savages swallow up all, even of their own kind, that are smaller and weaker than themselves. Yea, such, at present, is the miserable constitution of the world; to such vanity is it now subjected; that an immense majority of creatures, perhaps a million to one, can no otherwise preserve their own lives, than by destroying their fellow creatures!

4. And is not the very form, the outward appearance, of many of the creatures, as horrid as their dispositions? Where is the beauty which was stamped upon them, when they came first out of the hands of their Creator? There is not the least trace of it left: so far from it, that they are shocking to behold! Nay, they are not only terrible and grisly to look upon, but deformed, and that to a high degree. Yet their features, ugly as they are at best, are frequently made more deformed than usual, when they are distorted by pain; which they cannot avoid, any more than the wretched sons of men. Pain of various kinds, weakness, sickness, diseases innumerable, come upon them; perhaps from within; perhaps from one another; perhaps from the inclemency of seasons; from fire, hail, snow, or storm; or from a thousand causes which they cannot foresee or prevent.

5. Thus, "as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; even so death passed upon all men;" and not on man only, but on those creatures also, that "did not sin after the similitude of Adam's transgression." And not death alone came upon them, but all its train of preparatory evils; pain, and ten thousand sufferings. Nor these only, but likewise all those irregular passions, all those unlovely tempers, (which in men are sins, and even in brutes, are sources of misery, "passed upon all" the inhabitants of the earth; and remain in all, except the children of God.

6. During this season of vanity, not only the feebler creatures are continually destroyed by the stronger, not only the strong are destroyed by those that are of equal strength; but both the one and the other are exposed to the violence and cruelty of him that is now their common enemy, man. And if his swiftness and strength is not equal to theirs, yet his art more than supplies that defect. By this, he eludes all their force, how great soever it be; by this he defeats all their swiftness; and, notwithstanding their various shifts and contrivances, discovers all their retreats. He pursues them over the widest plains, and through the thickest forests. He overtakes them in the fields of air, he finds them out in the depths of the sea. Nor are the mild and friendly creatures who still own his sway, and are duteous to his commands,

secured thereby from more than brutal violence; from outrage and abuse of various kinds. Is the generous horse, that serves his master's necessity or pleasure, with unwearied diligence; is the faithful dog, that waits the motion of his hand, or his eye, exempt from this? What returns for their long and faithful service do many of these poor creatures find! And what a dreadful difference is there, between what they suffer from their fellow brutes, and what they suffer from the tyrant man! The lion, the tiger, or the shark, give them pain from mere necessity, in order to prolong their own life; and put them out of their pain at once: but the human shark, without any such necessity, torments them of his free choice; and perhaps continues their lingering pain, till, after months or years, death signs their release.

III. 1. But will "the creature," will even the brute creation, always remain in this deplorable condition? God forbid that we should affirm this; yea, or even entertain such a thought! While "the whole creation groaneth together," (whether men attend or not,) their groans are not dispersed in idle air, but enter into the ears of him that made them. While his creatures "travail together in pain," he knoweth all their pain, and is bringing them nearer and nearer to the birth, which shall be accomplished in its season. He seeth "the earnest expectation" wherewith the whole animated creation "waiteth for" that final "manifestation of the sons of God;" in which "they themselves also shall be delivered [not by annihilation; annihilation is not deliverance] from the [present] bondage of corruption, into [a measure of] the glorious liberty of the children of God."

2. Nothing can be more express: away with vulgar prejudices, and let the plain word of God take place. They shall be delivered from "the bondage of corruption, into glorious liberty;" even a measure, according as they are capable, of "the liberty of the children of God."

A general view of this is given us in the twenty-first chapter of the Revelation. When he that "sitteth on the great white throne" hath pronounced, "Behold, I make all things new;" when the word is fulfilled, "The tabernacle of God is with men, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them and be their God;"—then the following blessing shall take place (not only on the children of men; there is no such restriction in the text; but) on every creature according to its capacity: "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying. Neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

3. To descend to a few particulars: The whole brute creation will then, undoubtedly, be restored, not only to the vigour, strength, and swiftness, which they had at their creation, but to a far higher degree of each than they ever enjoyed. They will be restored, not only to that measure of understanding which they had in paradise, but to a degree of it as much higher than that, as the understanding of an elephant is beyond that of a worm. And whatever affections they had in the garden of God, will be restored with vast increase; being exalted and refined in a manner which we ourselves are not now able to comprehend. The liberty they then had will be completely restored, and they will be free in all their motions. They will be delivered from all irregular appetites, from all unruly passions, from every disposition

that is either evil in itself, or has any tendency to evil. No rage will be found in any creature, no fierceness, no cruelty, or thirst for blood. So far from it, that "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid; the calf, and the young lion, together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall feed together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain," Isa. xi, 6, &c.

4. Thus, in that day, all the vanity, to which they are now helplessly subject, will be abolished; they will suffer no more, either from within or without; the days of their groaning are ended. At the same time, there can be no reasonable doubt, but all the horridness of their appearance, and all the deformity of their aspect, will vanish away, and be exchanged for their primeval beauty. And with their beauty, their happiness will return; to which there can then be no obstruction. As there will be nothing within, so there will be nothing without, to give them any uneasiness; no heat or cold, no storm or tempest, but one perennial spring. In the new earth, as well as the new heavens, there will be nothing to give pain, but every thing that the wisdom and goodness of God can create to give happiness. As a recompense for what they once suffered, while under the "bondage of corruption," when God has "renewed the face of the earth," and their corruptible body has put on incorruption, they shall enjoy happiness suited to their state, without alloy, without interruption, and without end.

5. But though I doubt not, that the Father of all has a tender regard for even his lowest creatures, and that, in consequence of this, he will make them large amends for all they suffer while under their present bondage; yet I dare not affirm, that he has an *equal regard* for them and for the children of men. I do not believe, that

> "He sees *with equal eyes*, as Lord of all,
> A hero perish, or a sparrow fall."

By no means. This is exceeding pretty; but it is absolutely false For though

> "Mercy, with truth and endless grace,
> O'er all his works doth reign,
> Yet chiefly he delights to bless
> His favourite creature, MAN."

God regards his meanest creatures much; but he regards man much more. He does not *equally* regard a hero and a sparrow; the best of men and the lowest of brutes. "How *much more* does your heavenly Father care for you?" says he "who is in the bosom of the Father." Those who thus strain the point, are clearly confuted by his question, "Are not ye *much better* than they?" Let it suffice, that God regards every thing that he hath made, in its own order, and in proportion to that measure of his own image which he has stamped upon it.

6. May I be permitted to mention here a conjecture concerning the brute creation? What if it should then please the all-wise, the all-gracious Creator, to raise them higher in the scale of beings? What if it should please him, when he makes us "equal to angels," to make them what we are now,—creatures capable of God; capable of knowing, and loving, and enjoying, the Author of their being? If it should be so, ought our eye to be evil, because he is good? However this be he will certainly do what will be most for his own glory.

7. If it be objected to all this, (as very probably it will,) "But of what use will those creatures be in that future state?" I answer this by another question, What use are they of now? If there be (as has commonly been supposed,) eight thousand species of insects; who is able to inform us of what use seven thousand of them are? If there are four thousand species of fishes; who can tell us of what use are more than three thousand of them? If there are six hundred sorts of birds; who can tell of what use five hundred of those species are? If there be four hundred sorts of beasts; to what use do three hundred of them serve? Consider this; consider how little we know of even the present designs of God; and then you will not wonder, that we know still less of what he designs to do in the new heavens and the new earth.

8. "But what end does it answer to dwell upon this subject which we so imperfectly understand?" To consider so much as we do understand, so much as God has been pleased to reveal to us, may answer that excellent end,—to illustrate that mercy of God which "is over all his works." And it may exceedingly confirm our belief, that much more he "is loving to every man." For how well may we urge our Lord's words; "Are not ye much better than they?" If then the Lord takes such care of the fowls of the air, and of the beasts of the field, shall he not much more take care of *you*, creatures of a nobler order? If "the Lord will save," as the inspired writer affirms, "both man and beast," in their several degrees, surely, "the children of men may put their trust under the shadow of his wings!"

9. May it not answer another end; namely, furnish us with a full answer to a plausible objection against the justice of God, in suffering numberless creatures, that never had sinned, to be so severely punished? They could not sin, for they were not moral agents. Yet how severely do they suffer!—yea, many of them, beasts of burden in particular, almost the whole time of their abode on earth; so that they can have no retribution here below. But the objection vanishes away, if we consider, that something better remains after death for these poor creatures also; that these likewise shall one day be delivered from this bondage of corruption, and shall then receive an ample amends for all their present sufferings.

10. One more excellent end may undoubtedly be answered by the preceding considerations. They may encourage us to imitate him whose mercy is over all his works. They may soften our hearts towards the meaner creatures, knowing that the Lord careth for them. It may enlarge our hearts towards those poor creatures, to reflect that, as vile as they appear in our eyes, not one of them is forgotten in the sight of our Father which is in heaven. Through all the vanity to which they are now subjected, let us look to what God hath prepared for them. Yea, let us habituate ourselves to look forward, beyond this present scene of bondage, to the happy time when they will be delivered therefrom, into the liberty of the children of God!

11. From what has been said I cannot but draw one inference, which no man of reason can deny. If it is this which distinguishes men from beasts, that they are creatures capable of God, capable of knowing, and loving, and enjoying him; then whoever is "without God in the world," whoever does not know, or love, or enjoy God, and

is not careful about the matter, does, in effect, disclaim the nature of man, and degrade himself into a beast! Let such vouchsafe a little attention to those remarkable words of Solomon: "I said in my heart concerning the estate of the sons of men,—they might see, that they themselves are beasts," Eccl. iii, 18. These sons of men are, undoubtedly, beasts; and that by their own act and deed; for they deliberately and wilfully disclaim the sole characteristic of human nature. It is true they may have a share of reason; they have speech, and they walk erect; but they have not the mark, the only mark, which totally separates man from the brute creation. "That which befalleth beasts, the same thing befalleth them." They are equally without God in the world; "so that a man [of this kind] hath no pre-eminence above a beast."

12. So much more let all those who are of a nobler turn of mind, assert the distinguishing dignity of their nature! Let all who are of a more generous spirit, know and maintain their rank in the scale of beings. Rest not till you enjoy the privilege of humanity; the knowledge and love of God. Lift up your heads, ye creatures capable of God! Lift up your hearts to the source of your being!

"Know God, and teach your souls to know
The joys that from religion flow."

Give your hearts to him, who, together with ten thousand blessings, has given you his Son, his only Son! Let your continual "fellowship be with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ!" Let God be in all your thoughts, and ye will be men indeed. Let him be your God and your all,—the desire of your eyes, the joy of your heart, and your portion for ever!

SERMON LXVI.—*The Mystery of Iniquity.*

"The mystery of iniquity doth already work," 2 Thess. ii, 7

1. WITHOUT inquiring how far these words refer to any particular event in the Christian church, I would at present take occasion from them, to consider that important question,—In what manner the mystery of iniquity hath wrought among us, till it hath well nigh covered the whole earth?

2. It is certain, that "God made man upright;" perfectly holy, and perfectly happy: but by rebelling against God, he destroyed himself, lost the favour and the image of God, and entailed sin, with its attendant, pain, on himself, and all his posterity. Yet his merciful Creator did not leave him in this helpless, hopeless, state: he immediately appointed his Son, his well beloved Son, "who is the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person," to be the Saviour of men; "the propitiation for the sins of the whole world;" the great Physician, who, by his almighty Spirit, should heal the sickness of their souls, and restore them not only to the favour, but to "the image of God, wherein they were created."

3. This great mystery of godliness began to work from the very time of the original promise. Accordingly, the Lamb being, in the purpose

of God, "slain from the beginning of the world," from the same period his sanctifying Spirit began to renew the souls of men. We have an undeniable instance of this in Abel, who "obtained a testimony" from God, "that he was righteous," Heb. xi, 4. And from that very time all that were partakers of the same faith, were partakers of the same salvation; were not only reinstated in the favour, but likewise restored to the image of God.

4. But how exceeding small was the number of these, even from the earliest ages! No sooner did "the sons of men multiply upon the face of the earth," than God, looking down from heaven, "saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth;" so great that "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was evil, only evil, and that continually," Gen. vi, 1–5. And so it remained, without any intermission, till God executed that terrible sentence; "I will destroy man whom I have created, from the face of the earth," verse 7.

5. Only "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord;" being "a just man, and perfect in his generations." Him, therefore, with his wife, his sons, and their wives, God preserved from the general destruction. And one might have imagined, that this small remnant would likewise have been "perfect in their generations." But how far was this from being the case! Presently after this signal deliverance, we find one of them, Ham, involved in sin, and under his father's curse. And how did the "mystery of iniquity" afterwards work, not only in the posterity of Ham, but in the posterity of Japheth; yea, and of Shem,—Abraham and his family only excepted!

6. Yea, how did it work even in the posterity of Abraham; in God's chosen people! Were not these also, down to Moses, to David, to Malachi, to Herod the great, a faithless and stubborn generation, a "sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity," continually forsaking the Lord, and "provoking the Holy One of Israel?" And yet we have no reason to believe that these were worse than the nations that surrounded them, who were universally swallowed up in all manner of wickedness, as well as in damnable idolatries, not having the God of heaven "in all their thoughts," but working all uncleanness with greediness.

7. In the fulness of time, when iniquity of every kind, when ungodliness and unrighteousness, had spread over all nations, and covered the earth as a flood; it pleased God to lift up a standard against it, by "bringing his first-begotten into the world." Now, then, one would expect the "mystery of godliness" would totally prevail over the "mystery of iniquity;" that the Son of God would be "a light to lighten the Gentiles;" as well as "salvation to his people Israel." All Israel, one would think, yea, and all the earth, will soon be filled with the glory of the Lord. Nay: the "mystery of iniquity" prevailed still; well nigh over the face of the earth. How exceeding small was the number of those whose souls were healed by the Son of God himself! "When Peter stood up in the midst of them, the number of names was about a hundred and twenty," Acts i, 15. And even these were but imperfectly healed; the chief of them being a little before so weak in faith, that though they did not, like Peter, forswear their Master, yet "they all forsook him and fled." A plain proof that the sanctifying "Spirit was not [then] given, because Jesus was not glorified."

8. It was then, when he had "ascended up on high, and led captivity

captive," that "the promise of the Father" was fulfilled, which they had heard from him. It was then he began to work like himself, showing that "all power was given to him in heaven and earth." "When the day of pentecost was fully come, suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and there appeared tongues as of fire; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost," Acts ii, 1, &c. In consequence of this, three thousand souls received medicine to heal their sickness; were restored to the favour and the image of God, under one sermon of St. Peter's, chap. ii, verse 41. "And the Lord added to them daily," [not *such as should be saved;* a manifest perversion of the text; but,] "such as were saved." The expression is peculiar; and so indeed is the position of the words; which run thus: "And the Lord added those that were saved, daily, to the church." First, they "were saved" from the power of sin; then they "were added" to the assembly of the faithful.

9. In order clearly to see how they were already saved, we need only observe the short account of them, which is recorded in the latter part of the second, and in the fourth chapter. "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and in the fellowship, and in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers:" that is, they were daily taught by the apostles, and had all things common, and daily received the Lord's supper, and attended all the public service, chap. ii, 41. "And all that believed, were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions, and parted them to all men, as every man had need," chap. ii, 41–45. And again: "The multitude of them that believed," now greatly increased, "were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common," chap. iv, 31, 32. And yet again: "Great grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses, sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need," verses 34, 35.

10. But here a question will naturally occur: How came they to act thus, to have all things in common, seeing we do not read of any positive command to do this? I answer, there needed no outward command: the command was written on their hearts. It naturally and necessarily resulted from the degree of love which they enjoyed. Observe! "They were of one heart, and of one soul;" and not so much as one [so the words run] said, [they could not while their hearts so overflowed with love,] "that any of the things which he possessed was his own." And wheresoever the same cause shall prevail, the same effect will naturally follow.

11. Here was the dawn of the proper gospel day. Here was a proper Christian church. It was now "the Sun of righteousness" rose upon the earth, "with healing in his wings." He did now save his people from their sins:" he "healed all their sickness." He not only taught that religion which is the true "healing of the soul," but effectually planted it in the earth, filling the souls of all that believed in him with *righteousness*,—gratitude to God, and good will to man; attended with a *peace* that surpassed all understanding, and with *joy* unspeakable and full of glory.

12. But how soon did "the mystery of iniquity" work again, and obscure the glorious prospect! It began to work (not openly indeed, but covertly) in two of the Christians; Ananias and Sapphira. "They sold their possession," like the rest, and probably from the same motive; but, afterwards, giving place to the devil, and reasoning with flesh and blood, they "kept back part of the price." See the first Christians, that "made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience!" The first that "drew back to perdition:" instead of continuing to "believe to the [final] salvation of the soul!" Mark the first plague which infected the Christian church; namely, the love of money! And will it not be the grand plague in all generations, whenever God shall revive the same work? Oh ye believers in Christ, take warning! Whether you are yet but little children, or young men that are strong in the faith, see the snare; your snare in particular,—that which you will be peculiarly exposed to, after you have escaped from gross pollutions. "Love not the world, neither the things of the world! If any man love the world," whatever he was in time past, "the love of the Father is not [now] in him!"

13. However, this plague was stayed in the first Christian church, by instantly cutting off the infected persons. By that signal judgment of God on the first offenders, "great fear came upon all," Acts v, 11; so that, for the present at least, not one dared to follow their example. Meantime believers, men full of faith and love, who rejoiced to have all things in common, "were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women," verse 14.

14. If we inquire in what manner the "mystery of iniquity," the energy of Satan, began to work again in the Christian church, we shall find it wrought in quite a different way; putting on quite another shape: partiality crept in among the Christian believers. Those by whom the distribution to every one was made, had respect of persons; largely supplying those of their own nation, while the other widows, who were not Hebrews, "were neglected in the daily administration," chap. vi, 1. Distribution was not made to them according as every one had need. Here was a manifest breach of brotherly love in the Hebrews; a sin both against justice and mercy: seeing the Grecians, as well as the Hebrews, had "sold all they had, and laid the price at the apostles' feet." See the second plague that broke in upon the Christian church!—Partiality; respect of persons; too much regard for those of our own side; and too little for others, though equally worthy.

15. The infection did not stop here, but one evil produced many more. From partiality in the Hebrews, "there arose in the Grecians a murmuring against" them; not only discontent and resentful thoughts, but words suitable thereto; unkind expressions, hard speeches, evil speaking, and backbiting, naturally followed. And by the "root of bitterness [thus] springing up, [undoubtedly] many were defiled." The apostles indeed soon found out a means of removing the occasion of this murmuring; yet so much of the evil root remained, that God saw it needful to use a severer remedy. He let loose the world upon them all; if haply by their sufferings, by the spoiling of their goods, by pain, imprisonment, and death itself, he might at once punish and amend them. And persecution, God's last remedy for a backsliding people, had the happy effect for which he intended it. Both the partiality of

the Hebrews ceased, and the murmuring of the Grecians: and "then had the churches rest, and were edified;" built up in the love of God and one another; "and, walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied," Acts ix, 31.

16. It seems to have been some time after this, that "the mystery of iniquity" began to work in the form of zeal. Great troubles arose by means of some who zealously contended for circumcision, and the rest of the ceremonial law; till the apostles and elders put an end to the spreading evil, by that final determination,—"It seemeth good unto the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay on you no greater burden than these necessary things; that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication," chap. xv, 28, 29. Yet was not this evil so thoroughly suppressed, but that it frequently broke out again; as we learn from various parts of St. Paul's epistles, particularly that to the Galatians.

17. Nearly allied to this was another grievous evil, which at the same time sprang up in the church; want of mutual forbearance, and, of consequence, anger, strife, contention, variance. One very remarkable instance of this we find in this very chapter. When "Paul said to Barnabas, Let us visit the brethren where we have preached the word, Barnabas determined to take with him John;" because he was "his sister's son." "But Paul thought it not good to take him who had deserted them before." And he had certainly reason on his side. But Barnabas resolved to have his own way. Εγενετο ουν παροξυσμος,—*and there was a fit of anger.* It does not say on St. Paul's side: Barnabas only had passion, to supply the want of reason. Accordingly he departed from the work, and went home; while St. Paul went forward "through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches," verse 41.

18. The very first society of Christians at Rome were not altogether free from this evil leaven. There were "divisions and offences" among them also, chap. xvi, 17; although, in general, they seem to have "walked in love." But how early did the "mystery of iniquity" work, and how powerfully, in the church at Corinth? Not only schisms and heresies, animosities, fierce and bitter contentions, were among them; but open, actual sins; yea, "such fornication as was not named among the heathens," 1 Cor. v, 1. Nay, there was need to remind them, that "neither adulterers, nor thieves, nor drunkards," could "enter into the kingdom of heaven," chap. vi, 9, 10. And in all St. Paul's epistles we meet with abundant proof, that tares grew up with the wheat in all the churches; and that "the mystery of iniquity" did every where, in a thousand forms, counterwork "the mystery of godliness."

19. When St. James wrote his epistle, directed more immediately "to the twelve tribes scattered abroad," to the converted Jews, the tares sown among this wheat had produced a plentiful harvest. That grand pest of Christianity, a faith without works, was spread far and wide; filling the church with a "wisdom from beneath," which was "earthly, sensual, devilish," and which gave rise, not only to rash judging and evil speaking, but to "envy, strife, confusion, and every evil work." Indeed, whoever peruses the fourth and fifth chapters of this epistle, with serious attention, will be inclined to believe, that even in this early period, the tares had nigh choked the wheat; and that

among most of those to whom St. James wrote, no more than the form of godliness, if so much, was left.

20. St. Peter wrote about the same time "to the strangers," the Christians, "scattered abroad through" all those spacious provinces of "Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia [Minor,] and Bithynia." These, probably, were some of the most eminent Christians that were then in the world. Yet how exceeding far were even these from being "without spot and blemish!" And what grievous tares were here also growing up with the wheat! Some of them were "bringing in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them," 2 Pet. ii, 1, &c: and "many followed their pernicious ways;" of whom the apostle gives that terrible character: "They walk after the flesh," in "the lust of uncleanness, like brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed. Spots they are, and blemishes, while they feast with you;" (in the "feasts of charity," then celebrated throughout the whole church;) "having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin. These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest, for whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever." And yet these very men were called Christians; and were even then in the bosom of the church! Nor does the apostle mention them as infecting any one particular church only; but as a general plague, which even then was dispersed far and wide among all the Christians to whom he wrote!

21. Such is the authentic account of "the mystery of iniquity," working even in the apostolic churches!—an account given, not by the Jews or heathens, but by the apostles themselves. To this we may add the account which is given by the Head and Founder of the church; Him "who holds the stars in his right hand;" who is "the faithful and true Witness." We may easily infer what was the state of the church in general, from the state of the seven churches in Asia. One of these indeed, the church of Philadelphia, had "kept his word, and had not denied his name," Rev. iii, 8; the church of Smyrna was likewise in a flourishing state: but all the rest were corrupted, more or less; insomuch that many of them were not a jot better than the present race of Christians; and our Lord then threatened, what he has long since performed, to "remove the candlestick" from them.

22. Such was the real state of the Christian church, even during the first century; while not only St. John, but most of the apostles, were present with and presided over it. But what a mystery is this, that the All-wise, the All-gracious, the Almighty, should suffer it so to be, not in one only, but, as far as we can learn, in every Christian society, those of Smyrna and Philadelphia excepted! And how came these to be excepted? Why were these less corrupted, (to go no farther,) than the other churches of Asia? It seems, because they were less wealthy. The Christians in Philadelphia were not literally "increased in goods," like those at Ephesus and Laodicea; and if the Christians at Smyrna had acquired more wealth, it was swept away by persecution. So that these, having less of this world's goods, retained more of the simplicity and purity of the gospel.

23. But how contrary is this scriptural account of the ancient Christians to the ordinary apprehensions of men! We have been apt to imagine, that the primitive church was all excellence and perfection; answerable to that strong description which St. Peter cites from Moses:

"Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people." And such, without all doubt, the first Christian church, which commenced at the day of pentecost, was. But how soon did the fine gold become dim! How soon was the wine mixed with water! How little time elapsed, before the "god of this world" so far regained his empire, that Christians in general were scarce distinguishable from heathens, save by their opinions and modes of worship!

24. And if the state of the church in the very first century was so bad, we cannot suppose it was any better in the second. Undoubtedly it grew worse and worse. Tertullian, one of the most eminent Christians of that age, has given us an account of it in various parts of his writings, whence we learn that real, internal religion was hardly found; nay, that not only the tempers of the Christians were exactly the same with those of their heathen neighbours, (pride, passion, love of the world, reigning alike in both,) but their lives and manners also. The bearing a faithful testimony against the general corruption of Christians, seems to have raised the outcry against Montanus; and against Tertullian himself, when he was convinced that the testimony of Montanus was true. As to the heresies fathered upon Montanus, it is not easy to find what they were. I believe his grand heresy was, the maintaining that "without" inward and outward "holiness, no man shall see the Lord!"

25. Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, in every respect an unexceptionable witness, who flourished about the middle of the third century, has left us abundance of letters, in which he gives a large and particular account of the state of religion in his time. In reading this, one would be apt to imagine, he was reading an account of the present century: so totally void of true religion were the generality both of the laity and clergy, so immersed in ambition, envy, covetousness, luxury, and all other vices, that the Christians of Africa were then exactly the same as the Christians of England are now.

26. It is true, that during this whole period, during the first three centuries, there were intermixed longer or shorter seasons, wherein true Christianity revived. In those seasons the justice and mercy of God let loose the heathens upon the Christians. Many of these were then called to resist unto blood. And "the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church." The apostolic spirit returned; and many "counted not their lives dear unto themselves, so they might finish their course with joy." Many others were reduced to a happy poverty; and, being stripped of what they had loved too well, they "remembered from whence they were fallen, and repented, and did their first works."

27. Persecution never did, never could, give any lasting wound to genuine Christianity. But the greatest it ever received, the grand blow which was struck at the very root of that humble, gentle, patient love, which is the fulfilling of the Christian law, the whole essence of true religion, was struck in the fourth century by Constantine the Great, when he called himself a Christian, and poured in a flood of riches, honours, and power, upon the Christians; more especially upon the clergy. Then was fulfilled in the Christian church, what Velleius Paterculus says of the people of Rome: *Sublatâque imperii æmulâ, non gradu, sed præcipiti cursu, à virtute descitum, ad vitia transcursum.* Just so, when the fear of persecution was removed, and wealth and

honour attended the Christian profession, the Christians did not gradually sink, but rushed headlong into all manner of vices. Then the "mystery of iniquity" was no more hid, but stalked abroad in the face of the sun. Then, not the golden, but the iron age of the church commenced: then one might truly say,

Protinus irrupit venæ pejoris in ævum
Omne nefas; fugêre pudor, verumque, fidesque,
In quorum subiêre locum fraudesque, dolique,
Insidiæque, et vis, et amor sceleratus habendi.

At once, in that unhappy age, broke in
All wickedness, and every deadly sin:
Truth, modesty, and love, fled far away,
And force, and thirst of gold, claimed universal sway.

28. And this is the event which most Christian expositors mention with such triumph! Yea, which some of them supposed to be typified in the revelation, by "the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven!" Rather say, it was the coming of Satan, and all his legions from the bottomless pit: seeing from that very time he hath set up his throne over the face of the whole earth, and reigned over the Christian, as well as the pagan world, with hardly any control! Historians, indeed, tell us, very gravely, of nations, in every century, who were by such and such, (*saints* without doubt!) converted to Christianity: but still these converts practised all kind of abominations, exactly as they did before; no way differing, either in their tempers or in their lives, from the nations that were still called heathens. Such has been the deplorable state of the Christian church, from the time of Constantine till the reformation. A Christian nation, a Christian city, (according to the scriptural model,) was no where to be seen; but every city and country, a few individuals excepted, was plunged in all manner of wickedness.

29. Has the case been altered since the reformation? Does "the mystery of iniquity" no longer work in the church? No: the reformation itself has not extended to above one third of the western church; so that two thirds of this remain as they were; so do the eastern, southern, and northern churches. They are as full of heathenish, or worse than heathenish abominations, as ever they were before. And what is the condition of the reformed churches? It is certain that they were reformed in their opinions, as well as their modes of worship. But is not this all? Were either their tempers or lives reformed? Not at all. Indeed many of the reformers themselves complained, that "The reformation was not carried far enough." But what did they mean? Why, that they did not sufficiently reform the *rites* and *ceremonies* of the church. Ye fools and blind! To fix your whole attention on the circumstantials of religion! Your complaint ought to have been, the essentials of religion were not carried far enough! You ought vehemently to have insisted on an entire change of men's *tempers* and *lives;* on their showing they had "the mind that was in Christ," by "walking as he also walked." Without this, how exquisitely trifling was the reformation of opinions, and rites, and ceremonies? Now let any one survey the state of Christianity in the reformed parts of Switzerland; in Germany, or France; in Sweden, Denmark, Holland; in Great Britain and Ireland. How little are any of these reformed Christians better than heathen nations! Have they more, (I will not say, communion with God, although there is no Christianity without it,) but have they more

justice, mercy, or truth, than the inhabitants of China, or Indostan? Oh no! we must acknowledge with sorrow and shame, that we are far beneath them!

That we, who by thy Name are named,
The heathens unbaptized out-sin!

30. Is not this the *falling away* or *apostasy* from God, foretold by St. Paul in his second epistle to the Thessalonians, chap. ii, 3? Indeed, I would not dare to say, with George Fox, that this apostasy was universal; that there never were any real Christians in the world, from the days of the apostles till his time. But we may boldly say, that wherever Christianity has spread, the apostasy has spread also: insomuch that, although there are now and always have been individuals who were real Christians, yet the whole world never did, nor can at this day, show a Christian country or city.

31. I would now refer it to every man of reflection, who believes the Scriptures to be of God, whether this general apostasy does not imply the necessity of a general reformation? Without allowing this, how can we possibly justify either the wisdom or goodness of God? According to Scripture, the Christian religion was designed for "the healing of the nations;" for the saving from sin by means of the second Adam, all that were "constituted sinners" by the first. But it does not answer this end: it never did; unless for a short time at Jerusalem. What can we say, but that if it have not yet, it surely will answer it? The time is coming, when not only "all Israel shall be saved, but the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in." The time cometh, when "violence shall no more be heard in the earth, wasting or destruction within our borders;" but every city shall call her "walls salvation, and her gates praise;" when the people, saith the Lord, "shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land for ever; the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified," Isa. lx, 18, 21.

32. From the preceding considerations, we may learn the full answer to one of the grand objections of infidels against Christianity; namely, *The lives of Christians.* Of Christians, do you say? I doubt whether you ever knew a *Christian* in your life. When Tomo Chachi, the Indian chief, keenly replied to those who spoke to him of being a Christian, "Why there are Christians at Savannah! There are Christians at Frederica!"—the proper answer was, "No; they are not; they are no more Christians than you and Sinauky." "But are not these Christians in Canterbury, in London, in Westminster?" No; no more than they are angels. None are Christians, but they that have the mind which was in Christ, and walk as he walked. "Why, if these only are Christians," said an eminent wit, "I never saw a Christian yet." I believe it: you never did; and, perhaps, you never will; for you will never find them in the grand or the gay world. The few Christians that are upon the earth, are only to be found where you never look for them. Never, therefore, urge this objection more: never object to Christianity the lives or tempers of heathens. Though they are called Christians, the name does not imply the thing: they are as far from this as hell from heaven!

33. We may learn from hence, secondly, the extent of the fall; the astonishing spread of original corruption. What, among so many thousands, so many millions, is there none righteous, no, not one? Not by

nature. But including the grace of God, I will not say with the heathen poet;

Rari quippe boni, numero vix sunt totidem quot
Thebarum portæ, vel divitis ostia Nili.

As if he had allowed too much, in supposing there were a hundred good men in the Roman empire; he comes to himself, and affirms there are hardly seven. Nay, surely, there were seven thousand! There were so many long ago in one small nation, where Elijah supposed there were none at all. But allowing a few exceptions, we are authorized to say, "The whole world lieth in wickedness;" yea, "in the wicked one;" as the words properly signify. "Yes, the whole heathen world." Yea, and the Christian too; (so called;) for where is the difference, save in a few externals! See with your own eyes! Look into that large country, Indostan. There are Christians and heathens too. Which have more justice, mercy, and truth? The Christians or the heathens? Which are most corrupt, infernal, devilish, in their tempers and practice? The English or the Indians? Which have desolated whole countries, and clogged the rivers with dead bodies?

Oh sacred name of Christian! how profaned!

Oh earth, earth, earth! how dost thou groan under the villanies of thy *Christian* inhabitants!

34. From many of the preceding circumstances we may learn, thirdly, what is the genuine tendency of riches: what a baleful influence they have had, in all ages, upon pure and undefiled religion. Not that money is an evil of itself: it is applicable to good as well as bad purposes. But nevertheless, it is an undoubted truth, that "the love of money is the root of all evil;" and also that the possession of riches naturally breeds the love of them. Accordingly it is an old remark,

Crescit amor nummi, quantum ipsa pecunia crescit:

"As money increases, so does the love of it;" and always will, without a miracle of grace. Although, therefore, other causes may concur; yet this has been, in all ages, the principal cause of the decay of true religion in every Christian community. As long as the Christians in any place were poor, they were devoted to God. While they had little of the world they did not love the world; but the more they had of it, the more they loved it. This constrained the lover of their souls, at various times, to unchain their persecutors; who, by reducing them to their former poverty, reduced them to their former purity. But still remember, riches have, in all ages, been the bane of genuine Christianity!

35. We may learn hence, fourthly, how great watchfulness they need who desire to be real Christians; considering what a state the world is in! May not each of them well say,

"Into a world of ruffians sent,
I walk on hostile ground:
Wild human bears on slaughter bent,
And ravening wolves surround."

They are the more dangerous, because they commonly appear in sheep's clothing. Even those who do not pretend to religion, yet make fair professions of good will, of readiness to serve us; and, perhaps, of truth and honesty. But beware of taking their word! Trust not any man, until he fears God! It is a great truth,

"He that fears no God, can love no friend:"

Therefore stand upon your guard against every one that is not earnestly seeking to save his soul. We have need to keep both our heart and mouth as "with a bridle, while the ungodly are in our sight." Their conversation, their spirit, is infectious, and steals upon us unawares, we know not how. "Happy is the man that feareth always," in this sense also, lest he should partake of other men's sins. Oh "keep thyself pure!" "Watch and pray, that thou enter not into temptation!"

36. We may learn from hence, lastly, what thankfulness becomes those who have escaped the corruption that is in the world; whom God hath chosen out of the world, to be holy and unblamable. "Who is it that maketh thee to differ?" "And what hast thou which thou hast not received?" Is it not "God [alone] who worketh in thee both to will and to do of his good pleasure?" "And let those give thanks whom the Lord hath redeemed and delivered from the hand of the enemy." Let us praise him, that he hath given us to see the deplorable state of all that are round about us, to see the wickedness which overflows the earth, and yet not be borne away by the torrent! We see the general, the almost universal contagion; and yet it cannot approach to hurt us! Thanks be unto him "who hath delivered us from so great a death, and doth still deliver!" And have we not farther ground for thankfulness, yea, and strong consolation, in the blessed hope which God hath given us, that the time is at hand, when righteousness shall be as universal as unrighteousness is now? Allowing that "the whole creation now groaneth together" under the sin of man, our comfort is, it will not always groan: God will arise and maintain his own cause; and the whole creation shall then be delivered both from moral and natural corruption. Sin, and its consequence, pain, shall be no more: holiness and happiness will cover the earth. Then shall all the ends of the world see the salvation of our God; and the whole race of mankind shall know, and love, and serve God, and reign with him for ever and ever!

SERMON LXVII.—*The End of Christ's Coming.*

"For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil," 1 John iii, 8.

MANY eminent writers, heathen as well as Christian, both in earlier and later ages, have employed their utmost labour and art in painting the beauty of virtue. And the same pains they have taken to describe, in the liveliest colours, the deformity of vice; both of vice in general, and of those particular vices which were most prevalent in their respective ages and countries. With equal care they have placed in a strong light the happiness that attends virtue, and the misery which usually accompanies vice, and always follows it. And it may be acknowledged, that treatises of this kind are not wholly without their use. Probably, hereby, some, on the one hand, have been stirred up to desire and follow after virtue; and some, on the other hand, checked in their career of vice,—perhaps reclaimed from it, at least for a season. But the change effected in men by these means is seldom either deep or universal: much less is it durable; in a little space it vanishes away as the morning cloud. Such motives are far too feeble to overcome the num-

berless temptations that surround us. All that can be said of the beauty and advantage of virtue, and the deformity and ill effects of vice, cannot resist, and much less overcome and heal, one irregular appetite or passion.

"All these fences, and their whole array,
One cunning bosom sin sweeps quite away."

2. There is, therefore, an absolute necessity, if ever we would conquer vice, or steadily persevere in the practice of virtue, to have arms of a better kind than these; otherwise we may *see* what is right, but we cannot attain it. Many of the men of reflection among the very heathens were deeply sensible of this. The language of their heart was that of Medea:—

Video meliora, proboque;
Deteriora sequor:

How exactly agreeing with the words of the apostle: (personating a man convinced of sin, but not yet conquering it:) "The good that I would, I do not; but the evil I would not, that I do." The impotence of the human mind, even the Roman philosopher could discover: "There is in every man," says he, "this weakness;" (he might have said this sore disease;) "*Gloriæ sitis:* thirst for glory. Nature points out the disease; but nature shows us no remedy."

3. Nor is it strange, that though they sought for a remedy, yet they found none. For they sought it, where it never was and never will be found, namely, in themselves; in reason, and in philosophy: broken reeds, bubbles, smoke! They did not seek it in God, in whom alone it is possible to find it. In God! No; they totally disclaim this; and that in the strongest terms. For although Cicero, one of their oracles, once stumbled upon that strange truth: "*Nemo unquam vir magnus sine afflatu divino fuit;*" (there never was any great man who was not divinely inspired;) yet in the very same tract he contradicts himself, and totally overthrows his own assertion, by asking; "*Quis pro virtute aut sapientiâ gratias dedit Deis unquam?*" "Who ever returned thanks to God for his virtue or wisdom?" The Roman poet, is, if possible, more express still; who, after mentioning several outward blessings, honestly adds

Hæc satis est orare Jovem, quæ donat et aufert:
Det vitam, det opes: Æquum mi animum ipse parabo.

We ask of God, what he can give or take;
Life, wealth; but virtuous I myself will make.

4. The best of them either sought virtue partly from God, and partly from themselves; or sought it from those gods who were, indeed, but devils, and so not likely to make their votaries better than themselves. So dim was the light of the wisest of men, till "life and immortality were brought to light by the gospel;" till "the Son of God was manifested to destroy the works of the devil."

But what are "the works of the devil," here mentioned? How was "the Son of God manifested," to destroy them? And how, in what manner, and by what steps, does he actually "destroy" them? These three very important points we may consider in their order.

I. And first, What these works of the devil are, we learn from the words preceding and following the text: "We know that he was manifested to take away our sins," verse 5. "Whosoever abideth in him,

sinneth not: whosoever sinneth, seeth him not, neither knoweth him," verse 6 "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil," verse 8. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin," verse 9. From the whole of this it appears, that "the works of the devil," here spoken of, are sin, and the fruits of sin.

2. But since the wisdom of God has now dissipated the clouds which so long covered the earth, and put an end to the childish conjectures of men concerning these things, it may be of use to take a more distinct view of these "works of the devil," so far as the oracles of God instruct us. It is true, the design of the Holy Spirit was to assist our faith, not gratify our curiosity; and therefore the account he has given, in the first chapters of Genesis, is exceeding short. Nevertheless, it is so clear, that we may learn therefrom whatsoever it concerns us to know.

3. To take the matter from the beginning: "The Lord God [literally, JEHOVAH, the GODS; that is, One and Three] created man in his own image;"—in his own *natural* image, as to his better part; that is, a spirit, as God is a spirit; endued with understanding; which, if not the essence, seems to be the most essential property of a spirit. And probably the human spirit, like the angelical, then discerned truth by intuition. Hence he named every creature, as soon as he saw it, according to its inmost nature. Yet his knowledge was limited, as he was a creature: ignorance, therefore, was inseparable from him; but error was not; it does not appear that he was mistaken in any thing. But he was capable of mistaking, of being deceived, although not necessitated to it.

4. He was endued also with a will, with various affections; (which are only the will exerting itself various ways;) that he might love, desire, and delight in that which is good: otherwise his understanding had been to no purpose. He was likewise endued with liberty; a power of choosing what was good, and refusing what was not so. Without this, both the will and the understanding would have been utterly useless. Indeed, without liberty, man had been so far from being a *free agent*, that he could have been no *agent* at all. For every *unfree being* is purely passive; not active in any degree. Have you a sword in your hand? Does a man, stronger than you, seize your hand, and force you to wound a third person? In this you are no agent, any more than the sword: the hand is as passive as the steel. So in every possible case He that is not free, is not an agent, but a patient.

5. It seems, therefore, that every spirit in the universe, as such, is endued with *understanding*, and, in consequence, with a *will*, and with a measure of *liberty;* and that these three are inseparably united in every intelligent nature. And observe: *liberty necessitated*, or overruled, is really no liberty at all. It is a contradiction in terms. It is the same as *unfree freedom;* that is, downright nonsense.

6. It may be farther observed, (and it is an important observation,) that where there is no liberty, there can be no moral good or evil; no virtue or vice. The fire warms us; yet it is not capable of virtue: it burns us; yet this is no vice. There is no virtue, but where an intelligent being knows, loves, and chooses what is good; nor is there any vice, but where such a being knows, loves, and chooses what is evil.

7. And God created man, not only in his natural, but likewise in his own *moral* image. He created him not only "in knowledge," but also in righteousness and true holiness. As his understanding was without blemish, perfect in its kind; so were all his affections. They were all set right, and duly exercised on their proper objects. And as a free agent, he steadily chose whatever was good, according to the direction of his understanding. In so doing, he was unspeakably happy; dwelling in God, and God in him; having an uninterrupted fellowship with the Father and the Son, through the eternal Spirit, and the continual testimony of his conscience, that all his ways were good and acceptable to God.

8. Yet his liberty (as was observed before) necessarily included a power of choosing or refusing either good or evil. Indeed it has been doubted, whether man could then choose evil, knowing it to be such. But it cannot be doubted, he might mistake evil for good. He was not infallible; therefore, not impeccable. And this unravels the whole difficulty of the grand question, "Unde malum?" "How came evil into the world?" It came from "Lucifer, son of the morning." It was the work of the devil. "For the devil," saith the apostle, "sinneth from the beginning;" that is, was the first sinner in the universe, the author of sin, the first being who, by the abuse of his liberty, introduced evil into the creation. He,

> "Of the first,
> If not the first archangel,"

was self-tempted to think too highly of himself. He freely yielded to the temptation; and gave way, first to pride, then to self will. He said, "I will sit upon the sides of the north: I will be like the Most High." He did not fall alone, but soon drew after him a third part of the stars of heaven; in consequence of which they lost their glory and happiness, and were driven from their former habitation.

9. "Having great wrath," and perhaps envy at the happiness of the creatures whom God had newly created, it is not strange that he should desire and endeavour to deprive them of it. In order to this, he concealed himself in the serpent, who was the most subtle, or intelligent, of all the brute creatures; and, on that account, the least liable to raise suspicion. Indeed some have (not improbably) supposed, that the serpent was then endued with reason and speech. Had not Eve known he was so, would she have admitted any parley with him? Would she not have been frightened rather than deceived? (as the apostle observes she was.) To deceive her, Satan mingled truth with falsehood;—"Hath God said, Ye may not eat of every tree of the garden?"—and soon after persuaded her to disbelieve God, to suppose his threatening should not be fulfilled. She then lay open to the whole temptation: to "the desire of the flesh;" for the tree was "good for food:" to "the desire of the eyes;" for it was "pleasant to the eyes:" and to "the pride of life;" for it was "to be desired to make one wise," and consequently honoured. So unbelief begot pride. She thought herself wiser than God; capable of finding a better way to happiness than God had taught her. It begot self will: she was determined to do her own will, not the will of Him that made her. It begot foolish desires; and completed all by outward sin: "She took of the fruit and did eat."

10. She then "gave to her husband, and he did eat." And in that day, yea, that moment, he *died!* The life of God was extinguished in his soul. The glory departed from him. He lost the whole moral image of God, righteousness and true holiness. He was unholy; he was unhappy; he was full of sin; full of guilt, and tormenting fears. Being broke off from God, and looking upon him now as an angry Judge, "he was afraid." But how was his understanding darkened, to think he could "hide himself from the presence of the Lord, among the trees of the garden!" Thus was his soul utterly dead to God! And in that day his body likewise began to die,—became obnoxious to weakness, sickness, pain; all preparatory to the death of the body, which naturally led to eternal death.

II. Such are "the works of the devil;" sin and its fruits; considered in their order and connection. We are, in the second place, to consider how the Son of God was manifested, in order to destroy them.

1. He was manifested, as the only begotten Son of God, in glory equal with the Father, to the inhabitants of heaven, before and at the foundation of the world. These "morning stars sang together," all these "sons of God shouted for joy," when they heard him pronounce, "Let there be light; and there was light;"—when he "spread the north over the empty space," and "stretched out the heavens as a curtain." Indeed it was the universal belief of the ancient church, that God the Father none hath seen, nor can see; that from all eternity he hath dwelt in light unapproachable; and that it is only in and by the Son of his love, that he hath, at any time, revealed himself to his creatures.

2. How the Son of God was manifested to our first parents, in paradise, it is not easy to determine. It is generally, and not improbably, supposed, that he appeared to them in the form of a man, and conversed with them face to face. Not that I can at all believe the ingenious dream of Dr. Watts, concerning "the glorious humanity of Christ," which he supposes to have existed before the world began, and to have been endued with, I know not what astonishing powers. Nay, I look upon this to be an exceeding dangerous, yea, mischievous hypothesis; as it quite excludes the force of very many scriptures, which have been hitherto thought to prove the Godhead of the Son. And I am afraid it was the grand means of turning that great man aside from the faith once delivered to the saints;—that is, if he was turned aside; if that beautiful soliloquy be genuine, which is printed among his posthumous works, wherein he so earnestly beseeches the Son of God not to be displeased, "because he cannot believe him to be co-equal and co-eternal with the Father."

3. May we not reasonably believe that it was by similar appearances that he was manifested, in succeeding ages, to Enoch, while he "walked with God;" to Noah, before and after the deluge; to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, on various occasions; and, to mention no more, to Moses? This seems to be the natural meaning of the word; "My servant Moses is faithful in all my house.—With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of Jehovah shall he behold;" namely, the Son of God.

4. But all these were only types of his grand manifestation. It was in the fulness of time, (in just the middle age of the world, as a great

man largely proves,) that God "brought his first begotten into the world, made of a woman," by the power of the Highest overshadowing her. He was afterwards manifested to the shepherds; to devout Simeon; to Anna, the prophetess; and to "all that waited for redemption in Jerusalem."

5. When he was of due age for executing his priestly office, he was manifested to Israel; preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, in every town, and in every city. And for a time he was glorified by all, who acknowledged that he "spake as never man spake;" "that he spake as one having authority," with all the wisdom of God, and the power of God. He was manifested by numberless "signs, and wonders, and mighty works which he did," as well as by his whole life; being the only one born of a woman, "who knew no sin," who, from his birth to his death, did "all things well," doing continually, "not his own will, but the will of him that sent him."

6. After all, "Behold the Lamb of God, taking away the sin of the world!" This was a more glorious manifestation of himself, than any he had made before. How wonderfully was he manifested to angels and men, when he "was wounded for our transgressions;" when he "bore all our sins in his own body on the tree;" when, having by that one oblation of himself once offered, made a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, he cried out, "It is finished, and bowed his head and gave up the ghost!" We need but just mention those farther manifestations;—his resurrection from the dead; his ascension into heaven, into the glory which he had before the world began; and his pouring out the Holy Ghost, on the day of pentecost; both of which are beautifully described in those well known words of the Psalmist; "Thou art gone up on high, thou hast led captivity captive, and hast received gifts for men; yea, even for thine enemies, that the Lord God might dwell among [or in] them."

7. "That the Lord God might dwell in them:" This refers to a yet farther manifestation of the Son of God; even his inward manifestation of himself. When he spoke of this to his apostles, but a little before his death, one of them immediately asked; "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not unto the world?" By enabling us to believe in his name. For he is then inwardly manifested to us, when we are enabled to say with confidence, "My Lord, and my God!" Then each of us can boldly say, "The life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." And it is by thus manifesting himself in our hearts, that he effectually "destroys the works of the devil."

III. 1. How he does this, in what manner, and by what steps he does actually destroy them, we are now to consider. And, first, as Satan began his first work in Eve, by tainting her with unbelief, so the Son of God begins his work in man, by enabling us to believe in him. He both opens and enlightens the eyes of our understanding. Out of darkness he commands light to shine, and takes away the veil which the "god of this world" had spread over our hearts. And we then see, not by a chain of *reasoning*, but by a kind of *intuition*, by a direct view, that "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing to them their former trespasses;" not imputing them to me. In that

day "we know that we are of God," children of God by faith; "having redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins." "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ;"—that peace which enables us in every state therewith to be content; which delivers us from all perplexing doubts, from all tormenting fears; and, in particular, from that "fear of death, whereby we were, all our life time, subject to bondage."

2. At the same time, the Son of God strikes at the root of that grand work of the devil, pride; causing the sinner to humble himself before the Lord, to abhor himself, as it were, in dust and ashes. He strikes at the root of self will; enabling the humbled sinner to say in all things, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." He destroys the love of the world; delivering them that believe in him from "every foolish and hurtful desire;" from the "desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life." He saves them from seeking, or expecting to find happiness in any creature. As Satan turned the heart of man, from the Creator to the creature; so the Son of God turns his heart back again, from the creature to the Creator. Thus it is, by manifesting himself, he destroys the works of the devil; restoring the guilty outcast from God, to his favour, to pardon and peace; the sinner in whom dwelleth no good thing, to love and holiness; the burdened miserable sinner, to joy unspeakable, to real substantial happiness.

3. But it may be observed, that the Son of God does not destroy the whole work of the devil in man, as long as he remains in this life. He does not yet destroy bodily weakness, sickness, pain, and a thousand infirmities incident to flesh and blood. He does not destroy all that weakness of understanding, which is the natural consequence of the soul's dwelling in a corruptible body; so that still,

Humanum est errare et nescire;

Both ignorance and error belong to humanity. He entrusts us with only an exceeding small share of knowledge, in our present state; lest our knowledge should interfere with our humility, and we should again affect to be as gods. It is to remove from us all temptation to pride, and all thought of independency, (which is the very thing that men, in general, so earnestly covet, under the name of *liberty*,) that he leaves us encompassed with all these infirmities, particularly weakness of understanding; till the sentence takes place; "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return!"

4. Then error, pain, and all bodily infirmities cease: all these are destroyed by death. And death itself, "the last enemy" of man, shall be destroyed at the resurrection. The moment that we hear the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, "then shall be fulfilled the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." "This corruptible [body] shall put on incorruption; this mortal [body] shall put on immortality;" and the Son of God, manifested in the clouds of heaven, shall destroy this last work of the devil!

5. Here then we see in the clearest, strongest light, what is real religion: a restoration of man, by him that bruises the serpent's head, to all that the old serpent deprived him of; a restoration, not only to the favour, but likewise to the image of God, implying not barely deliverance from sin, but the being filled with the fulness of God. It is plain, if we attend to the preceding considerations, that nothing short of this

is Christian religion. Every thing else, whether negative or external, is utterly wide of the mark. But what a paradox is this! How little is it understood in the Christian world; yea, in this enlightened age, wherein it is taken for granted, the world is wiser than ever it was from the beginning! Among all our discoveries, who has discovered this? How few, either among the learned or unlearned! And yet, if we believe the Bible, who can deny it? Who can doubt of it? It runs through the Bible from the beginning to the end, in one connected chain; and the agreement of every part of it, with every other, is, properly, the analogy of faith. Beware of taking any thing else, or any thing less than this, for religion! Not *any thing else:* Do not imagine an outward form, a round of duties, both in public and private, is religion! Do not suppose, that honesty, justice, and whatever is called *morality*, (though excellent in its place,) is religion! And least of all dream that orthodoxy, right opinion, (vulgarly called *faith*,) is religion. Of all religious dreams, this is the vainest; which takes hay and stubble for gold tried in the fire!

6. Oh do not take *any thing less than this* for the religion of Jesus Christ! Do not take a part of it for the whole! What God hath joined together, put not asunder! Take no less for his religion, than the "faith that worketh by love;" all inward and outward holiness. Be not content with any religion, which does not imply the destruction of all the works of the devil; that is, of all sin. We know, weakness of understanding, and a thousand infirmities, will remain, while this corruptible body remains; but sin need not remain: this is that work of the devil, eminently so called, which the Son of God was manifested to destroy in this present life. He is able, he is willing, to destroy it now, in all that believe in him. Only be not straitened in your own bowels! Do not distrust his power, or his love! Put his promise to the proof! He hath spoken: and is he not ready, likewise, to perform? Only "come boldly to the throne of grace," trusting in his mercy; and you shall find, "he saveth to the uttermost all those that come to God through him!"

Sermon LXVIII.—*The General Spread of the Gospel.*

"The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea," Isa. xi, 9.

1. In what a condition is the world at present! How does darkness, intellectual darkness, ignorance, with vice and misery attendant upon it, cover the face of the earth! From the accurate inquiry, made with indefatigable pains by our ingenious countryman, Mr. Brerewood; (who travelled himself over a great part of the known world, in order to form the more exact judgment;) supposing the world to be divided into thirty parts, nineteen of them are professed heathens, altogether as ignorant of Christ, as if he had never come into the world: six of the remaining parts are professed Mohammedans: so that only five in thirty are so much as nominally Christians!

2. And let it be remembered, that since this computation was made, many new nations have been discovered; numberless islands, particularly in the South sea, large and well inhabited: but by whom? By heathens

of the basest sort; many of them inferior to the beasts of the field. Whether they eat men or no, (which indeed I cannot find any sufficient ground to believe,) they certainly kill all that fall into their hands. They are, therefore, more savage than lions; who kill no more creatures than are necessary to satisfy their present hunger. See the real dignity of human nature! Here it appears in its genuine purity, not polluted either by those "general corrupters, kings," or by the least tincture of religion! What will Abbé Raynal (that determined enemy to monarchy and revelation) say to this?

3. A little, and but a little, above the heathens in religion, are the Mohammedans. But how far and wide has this miserable delusion spread over the face of the earth! Insomuch that the Mohammedans are considerably more in number (as six to five) than Christians. And by all the accounts which have any pretence to authenticity, these are also, in general, as utter strangers to all true religion as their four footed brethren; as void of mercy as lions and tigers; as much given up to brutal lusts as bulls or goats: so that they are in truth a disgrace to human nature, and a plague to all that are under the iron yoke.

4. It is true, a celebrated writer (Lady Mary Wortley Montague,) gives a very different character of them. With the finest flow of words, in the most elegant language, she labours to wash the Æthiop white. She represents them as many degrees above the Christians; as some of the most amiable people in the world; as possessed of all the social virtues; as some of the most accomplished of men. But I can in no wise receive her report: I cannot rely upon her authority. I believe those round about her had just as much religion as their admirer had, when she was admitted into the interior parts of the grand Seignior's seraglio. Notwithstanding, therefore, all that such a witness does or can say in their favour, I believe the Turks in general are little, if at all better, than the generality of the heathens.

5. And little if at all better than the Turks, are the Christians in the Turkish dominions; even the best of them; those that live in the Morea, or are scattered up and down in Asia. The more numerous bodies of Georgian, Circassian, Mengrelian Christians, are a proverb of reproach to the Turks themselves; not only for their deplorable ignorance, but for their total, stupid, barbarous irreligion.

6. From the most authentic accounts we can obtain of the southern Christians, those in Abyssinia, and of the northern churches, under the jurisdiction of the patriarch of Moscow, we have reason to fear they are much in the same condition, both with regard to knowledge and religion, as those in Turkey. Or if those in Abyssinia are more civilized, and have a larger share of knowledge, yet they do not appear to have any more religion than either the Mohammedans or Pagans.

7. The western churches seem to have the pre-eminence over all these in many respects. They have abundantly more knowledge: they have more scriptural and more rational modes of worship. Yet two thirds of them are still involved in the corruptions of the church of Rome; and most of these are entirely unacquainted with either the theory or practice of religion. And as to those who are called Protestants or reformed, what acquaintance with it have they? Put Papists and Protestants, French and English together, the bulk of one, and of the other nation; and what manner of Christians are they? Are they

"holy as He that hath called them is holy?" Are they filled with "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost?" Is there "that mind in them which was also in Christ Jesus?" And do they "walk as Christ also walked?" Nay, they are as far from it as hell is from heaven!

8. Such is the present state of mankind in all parts of the world! But how astonishing is this, if there is a God in heaven; and if his eyes are over all the earth! Can he despise the work of his own hand? Surely this is one of the greatest mysteries under heaven! How is it possible to reconcile this with either the wisdom or goodness of God? And what can give ease to a thoughtful mind under so melancholy a prospect? What but the consideration, that things will not always be so; that another scene will soon be opened? God will be jealous of his honour: he will arise and maintain his own cause. He will judge the prince of this world, and spoil him of his usurped dominion. He will give his Son "the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession." "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." The loving knowledge of God, producing uniform, uninterrupted holiness and happiness, shall cover the earth; shall fill every soul of man.

9. "Impossible," will some men say, "yea, the greatest of all impossibilities, that we should see a Christian world; yea, a Christian nation, or city! How can these things be?" On one supposition, indeed, not only all impossibility, but all difficulty vanishes away. Only suppose the Almighty to act *irresistibly*, and the thing is done; yea, with just the same ease as when "God said, Let there be light; and there was light." But then, man would be man no longer: his inmost nature would be changed. He would no longer be a moral agent, any more than the sun or the wind; as he would no longer be endued with liberty,—a power of choosing, or self determination: consequently, he would no longer be capable of virtue or vice; of reward or punishment.

10. But setting aside this clumsy way of cutting the knot which we are not able to untie; how can all men be made holy and happy, while they continue men? While they still enjoy both the understanding, the affections, and the liberty, which are essential to a moral agent? There seems to be a plain, simple way of removing this difficulty, without entangling ourselves in any subtle, metaphysical disquisitions. As God is one, so the work of God is uniform in all ages. May we not then conceive how he *will* work on the souls of men in times to come, by considering how he *does* work *now*, and how he *has* wrought in times past?

11. Take one instance of this, and such an instance as you cannot easily be deceived in. You know how God wrought in *your own* soul, when he first enabled you to say, "The life I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." He did not take away your understanding; but enlightened and strengthened it. He did not destroy any of your affections: rather they were more vigorous than before. Least of all did he take away your liberty; your power of choosing good or evil: he did not *force* you: but, being *assisted* by his grace, you, like Mary, *chose* the better part. Just so has he *assisted* five in one house to make that happy *choice;* fifty or five hundred in one city; and many thousands in a nation;—without depriving any of them of that liberty which is essential to a moral agent.

12. Not that I deny, that there are exempt cases, wherein

"The overwhelming power of saving grace,"

does, for a time, work as irresistibly as lightning falling from heaven. But I speak of God's general manner of working, of which I have known innumerable instances; perhaps more within fifty years last past, than any one in England or in Europe. And with regard even to these exempt cases; although God does work irresistibly *for the time*, yet I do not believe that there is any human soul, in which God works irresistibly *at all times*. Nay, I am fully persuaded there is not. I am persuaded there are no men living that have not many times "resisted the Holy Ghost," and made void "the counsel of God against themselves." Yea, I am persuaded, every child of God has had, at some time, "life and death set before him," eternal life and eternal death; and has in himself the casting voice. So true is that well known saying of St. Austin; (one of the noblest he ever uttered;) "*Qui fecit nos sine nobis, non salvabit nos sine nobis:*" He that made us without ourselves, will not save us without ourselves. Now in the same manner as God *has* converted so many to himself, without destroying their liberty; he *can* undoubtedly convert whole nations, or the whole world: and it is as easy to him to convert a world, as one individual soul.

13. Let us observe what God has done already. Between fifty and sixty years ago, God raised up a few young men, in the university of Oxford, to testify those grand truths, which were then little attended to:—That without holiness no man shall see the Lord;—that this holiness is the work of God, who worketh in us both to will and to do;—that he doeth it of his own good pleasure, merely for the merits of Christ;—that this holiness is the mind that was in Christ; enabling us to walk as he also walked;—that no man can be thus sanctified till he be justified;—and, that we are justified by faith alone. These great truths they declared on all occasions, in private and in public; having no design but to promote the glory of God, and no desire but to save souls from death.

14. From Oxford, where it first appeared, the little leaven spread wider and wider. More and more saw the truth as it is in Jesus, and received it in the love thereof. More and more found "redemption through the blood of Jesus, even the forgiveness of sins." They were born again of his Spirit, and filled with righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. It afterwards spread to every part of the land, and a little one became a thousand. It then spread into North Britain, and Ireland; and a few years after, into New York, Pennsylvania, and many other provinces in America, even as high as Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. So that, although at first this "grain of mustard seed" was "the least of all the seeds;" yet, in a few years, it grew into a "large tree, and put forth great branches."

15. Generally, when these truths, justification by faith in particular, were declared in any large town, after a few days or weeks, there came suddenly on the great congregation,—not in a corner, at London, Bristol, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, in particular,—a violent and impetuous power, which,

"Like mighty winds or torrents fierce,
Did then opposers all o'erturn"

And this frequently continued, with shorter or longer intervals, for several weeks or months. But it gradually subsided, and then the work

of God was carried on by gentle degrees; while that Spirit, in watering the seed that had been sown, in confirming and strengthening them that had believed,

> "Deign'd his influence to infuse,
> Secret, refreshing as the silent dews."

And this difference in his usual manner of working, was observable, not only in Great Britain and Ireland, but in every part of America, from south to north, wherever the word of God came with power.

16. Is it not then highly probable, that God will carry on his work in the same manner as he has begun it? That he *will* carry it on, I cannot doubt; however Luther may affirm, that a revival of religion never lasts above a generation,—that is, thirty years; (whereas the present revival has already continued above fifty;) or however prophets of evil may say, "All will be at an end when the first instruments are removed." There will then, very probably, be a great shaking; but I cannot induce myself to think, that God has wrought so glorious a work, to let it sink and die away in a few years: no, I trust, this is only the beginning of a far greater work; the dawn of "the latter day glory."

17. And is it not probable, I say, that he will carry it on, in the same manner as he has begun? At the first breaking out of this work in this or that place, there may be a shower, a torrent of grace; and so at some other particular seasons, which "the Father has reserved in his own power:" but in general, it seems, the kingdom of God will not "come with observation;" but will silently increase, wherever it is set up, and spread from heart to heart, from house to house, from town to town, from one kingdom to another. May it not spread, first, through the remaining provinces; then, through the isles of North America; and, at the same time, from England to Holland, where there is already a blessed work in Utrecht, Haerlem, and many other cities? Probably it will spread from these to the Protestants in France, to those in Germany, and those in Switzerland; then to Sweden, Denmark, Russia, and all the other Protestant nations in Europe.

18. May we not suppose, that the same leaven of pure and undefiled religion, of the experimental knowledge and love of God, of inward and outward holiness, will afterwards spread to the Roman Catholics in Great Britain, Ireland, Holland; in Germany, France, Switzerland; and in all other countries, where Romanists and Protestants live intermixed, and familiarly converse with each other? Will it not then be easy for the wisdom of God to make a way for religion, in the life and power thereof, into those countries that are merely Popish; as Italy, Spain, Portugal? And may it not be gradually diffused from thence to all that name the name of Christ, in the various provinces of Turkey, in Abyssinia, yea, and in the remotest parts, not only of Europe, but of Asia, Africa, and America?

19. And in every nation under heaven, we may reasonably believe, God will observe the same order which he hath done from the beginning of Christianity. "They shall all know me, saith the Lord;" not from the greatest to the least; (this is that wisdom of the world, which is foolishness with God;) but, "from the least to the greatest;" that the praise may not be of men, but of God? Before the end, even the rich shall enter into the kingdom of God. Together with them will

enter in the great, the noble, the honourable; yea, the rulers, the princes, the kings of the earth. Last of all, the wise and learned, the men of genius, the philosophers, will be convinced that they are fools; will be "converted, and become as little children," and "enter into the kingdom of God."

20. Then shall be fully accomplished to the house of Israel, the spiritual Israel, of whatever people or nation, that gracious promise; "I will put my laws in their minds, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother; saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their ur righteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Then shall "the times of [universal] refreshment come from the presence of the Lord." The grand "pentecost" shall "fully come," and "devout men in every nation under heaven," however distant in place from each other, shall "all be filled with the Holy Ghost;" and they will "continue steadfast in the apostles' doctrine, and in the fellowship, and in the breaking of bread, and in prayers;" they will "eat their meat," and do all that they have to do, "with gladness and singleness of heart. Great grace will be upon them all;" and they will be "all of one heart and of one soul." The natural, necessary consequence of this will be the same as it was in the beginning of the Christian church: "None of them will say, that aught of the things which he possesses is his own; but they will have all things common. Neither will there be any among them that want: for as many as are possessed of lands or houses, will sell them; and distribution will be made to every man, according as he has need." All their desires, meantime, and passions, and tempers, will be cast in one mould; while all are doing the will of God on earth, as it is done in heaven. All their "conversation will be seasoned with salt," and will "minister grace to the hearers;" seeing it will not be so much they that speak, "as the Spirit of their Father that speaketh in them." And there will be no "root of bitterness springing up," either to defile or trouble them: there will be no Ananias or Sapphira, to bring back the cursed love of money among them: there will be no partiality; no "widows neglected in the daily ministration:" Consequently, there will be no temptation to any murmuring thought, or unkind word of one against another; while,

> "They all are of one heart and soul,
> And only love inspires the whole."

21. The grand stumbling block being thus happily removed out of the way, namely, the lives of the Christians; the Mohammedans will look upon them with other eyes, and begin to give attention to their words. And as their words will be clothed with divine energy, attended with the demonstration of the Spirit and power, those of them that fear God will soon take knowledge of the spirit whereby the Christians speak. They will "receive with meekness the engrafted word," and will bring forth fruit with patience. From them the leaven will soon spread to those who, till then, had no fear of God before their eyes. Observing the *Christian dogs*, as they used to term them, to have changed their nature; to be sober, temperate, just, benevolent; and that, in spite of all provocations to the contrary; from admiring their lives, they will

surely be led to consider and embrace their doctrine. And then the Saviour of sinners will say, "The hour is come; I will glorify my Father: I will seek and save the sheep that were wandering on the dark mountains. Now will I avenge myself of my enemy, and pluck the prey out of the lion's teeth. I will resume my own, for ages lost: I will claim the purchase of my blood." So he will go forth in the greatness of his strength, and all his enemies shall flee before him. All the prophets of lies shall vanish away, and all the nations that had followed them shall acknowledge the Great Prophet of the Lord, "mighty in word and deed;" and "shall honour the Son, even as they honour the Father."

22. And then the grand stumbling block being removed from the heathen nations also; the same Spirit will be poured out upon them, even those that remain in the uttermost parts of the sea. The poor American savage will no more ask, "What are the Christians better than us?"—when they see their steady practice of universal temperance, and of justice, mercy, and truth. The Malabarian heathen will have no more room to say, "Christian man take my wife: Christian man much drunk: Christian man kill man! *Devil-Christian!* Me no Christian." Rather, seeing how far the Christians exceed their own countrymen in whatsoever things are lovely and of good report, they will adopt a very different language, and say, *Angel-Christian!* The holy lives of the Christians will be an argument they will not know how to resist: seeing the Christians steadily and uniformly practise what is agreeable to the law written in their own hearts, their prejudices will quickly die away, and they will gladly receive "the truth as it is in Jesus."

23. We may reasonably believe, that the heathen nations which are mingled with the Christians, and those that, bordering upon Christian nations, have constant and familiar intercourse with them, will be some of the first who learn to worship God in spirit and in truth; those, for instance, that live on the continent of America, or in the islands that have received colonies from Europe. Such are likewise all those inhabitants of the East Indies, that adjoin to any of the Christian settlements. To these may be added, numerous tribes of Tartars, the heathen parts of the Russias, and the inhabitants of Norway, Finland, and Lapland. Probably these will be followed by those more distant nations with whom the Christians trade; to whom they will impart what is of infinitely more value than earthly pearls, or gold and silver. The God of love will then prepare his messengers, and make a way into the polar regions; into the deepest recesses of America, and into the interior parts of Africa; yea, into the heart of China and Japan, with the countries adjoining them. And "their sound" will then "go forth into all lands, and their voice to the ends of the earth!"

24. But one considerable difficulty still remains: there are very many heathen nations in the world, that have no intercourse, either by trade or any other means, with Christians of any kind. Such are the inhabitants of the numerous islands in the South sea, and probably in all large branches of the ocean. Now what shall be done for these poor outcasts of men? "How shall they believe," saith the apostle, "in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" You may add, "And how shall they preach, unless they

be sent?" Yea, but is not God able to send them? Cannot he raise them up, as it were, out of the stones? And can he ever want means of sending them? No: were there no other means, he can "take them by his Spirit," as he did Ezekiel, chap. iii, 12, or by his angel, as he did Philip, Acts viii, and set them down wheresoever it pleaseth him. Yea, he can find out a thousand ways, to foolish man unknown. And he surely will: for heaven and earth may pass away; but his word shall not pass away: he will give his Son "the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession."

25. And so all Israel too shall be saved. For "blindness has happened to Israel," as the great apostle observes, Rom. xi, 25, &c, till the fulness of the "Gentiles be come in." Then "the Deliverer that cometh out of Sion shall turn away iniquity from Jacob." "God hath now concluded them all in unbelief, that he may have mercy upon all." Yea, and he will so have mercy upon all Israel, as to give them all temporal, with all spiritual blessings. For this is the promise: "For the Lord thy God will gather thee from all nations, whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee. And the Lord thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it. And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul," Deut. xxx, 3. Again: "I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them: and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely: and I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever. I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. And I will plant them in this land assuredly, with my whole heart and with my whole soul," Jer. xxxii, 37, &c. Yet again: "I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean. from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God," Ezek. xxxvi, 24, &c.

26. At that time will be accomplished all those glorious promises made to the Christian church, which will not then be confined to this or that nation, but will include all the inhabitants of the earth. "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain," Isa. xi, 9. "Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise." Thou shalt be encompassed on every side with salvation, and all tha go through thy gates shall praise God. "The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory." The light of the sun and moon shall be swallowed up in the light of his countenance, shining upon thee. "Thy people also shall be all righteous, ... the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.' "As the earth bringeth forth her bud, and the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations," Isa. lx, 14, &c, and lxi, 11.

27. This I apprehend to be the answer, yea, the only full and satisfactory answer that can be given, to the objection against the wisdom

and goodness of God, taken from the present state of the world. It will not always be thus: these things are only permitted for a season by the great Governor of the world, that he may draw immense, eternal good out of this temporary evil. This is the very key which the apostle himself gives us in the words above recited: "God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all." In view of this glorious event, how well may we cry out; "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" although for a season "his judgments were unsearchable, and his ways past finding out," Rom. xi, 32, 33. It is enough, that we are assured of this one point, that all these transient evils will issue well, will have a happy conclusion; and that "mercy first and last will reign." All unprejudiced persons may see with their eyes, that he is already renewing the face of the earth: and we have strong reason to hope that the work he hath begun, he will carry on unto the day of the Lord Jesus; that he will never intermit this blessed work of his Spirit, until he has fulfilled all his promises, until he hath put a period to sin, and misery, and infirmity, and death, and re-established universal holiness and happiness, and caused all the inhabitants of the earth to sing together, "Hallelujah, the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!" "Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever!" Rev. vii, 12.

Sermon LXIX.—*The New Creation.*

"Behold, I make all things new," Rev. xxi, 5.

1. What a strange scene is here opened to our view! How remote from all our natural apprehensions! Not a glimpse of what is here revealed was ever seen in the heathen world. Not only the modern, barbarous, uncivilized heathens have not the least conception of it; but it was equally unknown to the refined, polished heathens of ancient Greece and Rome. And it is almost as little thought of or understood by the generality of Christians: I mean, not barely those that are nominally such; that have the form of godliness without the power; but even those that in a measure fear God, and study to work righteousness.

2. It must be allowed, that after all the researches we can make, still our knowledge of the great truth, which is delivered to us in these words, is exceedingly short and imperfect. As this is a point of mere revelation, beyond the reach of all our natural faculties, we cannot penetrate far into it, nor form any adequate conception of it. But it may be an encouragement to those who have, in any degree, tasted of the powers of the world to come, to go as far as they can go; interpreting scripture by scripture, according to the analogy of faith.

3. The apostle, caught up in the visions of God, tells us, in the first verse of the chapter, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth;" and adds, verse 5, "He that sat upon the throne said," [I believe the only words which he is said to utter throughout the whole book,] "Behold, I make all things new."

4. Very many commentators entertain a strange opinion, that this relates only to the present state of things; and gravely tell us, that the

words are to be referred to the flourishing state of the church, which commenced after the heathen persecutions. Nay, some of them have discovered, that all which the apostle speaks concerning the "new heaven and the new earth" was fulfilled when Constantine the Great poured in riches and honours upon the Christians. What a miserable way is this of making void the whole counsel of God, with regard to all that grand chain of events, in reference to his church, yea, and to all mankind, from the time that John was in Patmos, unto the end of the world! Nay, the line of this prophecy reaches farther still: it does not end with the present world, but shows us the things that will come to pass when this world is no more. For,

5. Thus saith the Creator and Governor of the universe; "Behold, I make all things new;"—all which are included in that expression of the apostle: "A new heaven and a new earth." *A new heaven:* the original word in Genesis, chap. i, is in the plural number: and indeed this is the constant language of Scripture; not *heaven*, but *heavens*. Accordingly, the ancient Jewish writers are accustomed to reckon three heavens; in conformity to which, the apostle Paul speaks of his being caught "up into the third heaven." It is this, the third heaven, which is usually supposed to be the more immediate residence of God; so far as any residence can be ascribed to his omnipresent Spirit, who pervades and fills the whole universe. It is here, (if we speak after the manner of men,) that the Lord sitteth upon his throne, surrounded by angels and archangels, and by all his flaming ministers.

6. We cannot think that this heaven will undergo any change, any more than its great Inhabitant. Surely this palace of the Most High was the same from eternity, and will be world without end. Only the inferior heavens are liable to change; the highest of which we usually call the starry heavens. This, St. Peter informs us, "is reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment, and destruction of ungodly men." In that day, "being on fire," it shall, first, "shrivel as a parchment scroll;" then it "shall be dissolved, and shall pass away with a great noise;" lastly, it shall "flee from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and there shall be found no place for it."

7. At the same time, "the stars shall fall from heaven;" the secret chain being broken which had retained them in their several orbits, from the foundation of the world. In the mean while the lower, or sublunary heaven, with the elements, (or principles that compose it,) "shall melt with fervent heat;" while "the earth, with the works that are therein, shall be burned up." This is the introduction to a far nobler state of things, such as it has not yet entered into the heart of man to conceive,—the universal restoration, which is to succeed the universal destruction. For "we look," says the apostle, "for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness," 2 Pet iii, 7, &c.

8. One considerable difference there will undoubtedly be in the starry heaven, when it is created anew: there will be no blazing stars no comets there. Whether those horrid, eccentric orbs are half-formed planets, in a chaotic state, (I speak on the supposition of a plurality of worlds,) or such as have undergone their general conflagration, they will certainly have no place in the new heaven, where all will be exact order and harmony. There may be many other differ

ences between the heaven that now is, and that which will be after the renovation. But they are above our apprehension: we must leave eternity to explain them.

9. We may more easily conceive the changes which will be wrought in the lower heaven, in the region of the air. It will be no more torn by hurricanes, or agitated by furious storms, or destructive tempests. Pernicious or terrifying meteors will have no place therein. We shall have no more occasion to say:

> "There like a trumpet, loud and strong,
> Thy thunder shakes our coast:
> While the red lightnings wave along,
> The banners of thy host!"

No: all will then be light, fair, serene; a lively picture of the eternal day.

10. All the elements (taking that word in the common sense, for the principles of which all natural beings are compounded) will be new indeed; entirely changed as to their qualities, although not as to their nature. Fire is at present the general destroyer of all things under the sun; dissolving all things that come within the sphere of its action, and reducing them to their primitive atoms. But no sooner will it have performed its last great office of destroying the heavens and the earth, (whether you mean thereby, one system only, or the whole fabric of the universe; the difference between one and millions of worlds being nothing before the great Creator;) when, I say, it has done this, the destructions wrought by fire will come to a perpetual end. It will destroy no more: it will consume no more: it will forget its power to burn;—which it possesses only during the present state of things;—and be as harmless in the new heavens and earth, as it is now in the bodies of men and other animals, and the substance of trees and flowers; in all which, (as late experiments show,) large quantities of ethereal fire are lodged; if it be not rather an essential component part of every material being under the sun. But it will, probably, retain its vivifying power, though divested of its power to destroy.

11. It has been already observed, that the calm, placid air will be no more disturbed by storms and tempests. There will be no more meteors with their horrid glare, affrighting the poor children of men. May we not add, (though, at first, it may sound like a paradox,) that there will be no more rain. It is observable, that there was none in paradise; a circumstance which Moses particularly mentions, Gen. ii, 5, 6; "The Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth.—But there went up a mist from the earth," which then covered up the abyss of waters, "and watered the whole face of the ground," with moisture sufficient for all the purposes of vegetation. We have all reason to believe, that the case will be the same when paradise is restored. Consequently, there will be no clouds or fogs; but one bright, refulgent day. Much less will there be any poisonous damps, or pestilential blasts. There will be no sirocco in Italy; no parching or suffocating winds in Arabia; no keen northeast winds in our own country,

> "Shattering the graceful locks of yon fair trees;"

but only pleasing, healthful breezes,

"Fanning the earth with odoriferous wings."

12. But what a change will the element of water undergo, when all things are made new! It will be, in every part of the world, clear and limpid; pure from all unpleasing or unhealthful mixtures; rising here and there in crystal fountains, to refresh and adorn the earth "with liquid lapse of murmuring stream." For undoubtedly, as there were in paradise, there will be various rivers gently gliding along, for the use and pleasure of both man and beast. But the inspired writer has expressly declared, "there will be no more sea," Rev. xxi, 1. We have reason to believe, that at the beginning of the world, when God said, "Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear," Gen. i, 9, the dry land spread over the face of the water, and covered it on every side. And so it seems to have done, till, in order to the general deluge, which God had determined to bring upon the earth at once, "the windows of heaven were opened, and the fountains of the great deep broken up." But the sea will then retire within its primitive bounds, and appear on the surface of the earth no more. Neither indeed, will there be any more need of the sea. For either, as the ancient poet supposes,

Omnis feret omnia tellus;

—every part of the earth will naturally produce whatever its inhabitants want;—or all mankind will procure what the whole earth affords, by a much easier and readier conveyance. For all the inhabitants of the earth, our Lord informs us, will then be ισαγγελοι,—*equal to angels:* on a level with them in swiftness, as well as strength: so that they can, quick as thought, transport themselves, or whatever they want, from one side of the globe to the other.

13. But it seems, a greater change will be wrought in the earth, than even in the air and water. Not that I can believe that wonderful discovery of Jacob Behme, which many so eagerly contend for; that the earth itself, with all its furniture and inhabitants, will then be transparent as glass. There does not seem to be the least foundation for this, either in Scripture or reason. Surely not in Scripture: I know not one text in the Old or New Testament, which affirms any such thing. Certainly it cannot be inferred from that text in Revelation, chap. iv, ver. 6; "And before the throne there was a sea of glass, like unto crystal." And yet, if I mistake not, this is the chief, if not the only scripture, which has been urged in favour of this opinion! Neither can I conceive that it has any foundation in reason. It has been warmly alleged, that all things would be far more beautiful, if they were quite transparent. But I cannot apprehend this: yea, I apprehend quite the contrary. Suppose every part of a human body were made transparent as crystal, would it appear more beautiful than it does now? Nay, rather, it would shock us above measure. The surface of the body, in particular, "the human face divine," is undoubtedly one of the most beautiful objects that can be found under heaven; but could you look through the rosy cheek, the smooth, fair forehead, or the rising bosom, and distinctly see all that lies within, you would turn away from it with loathing and horror!

14. Let us next take a view of those changes which we may reasonably suppose will then take place in the earth. It will no more be bound up with intense cold, nor parched up with extreme heat; but

will have such a temperature as will be most conducive to its fruitfulness. If, in order to punish its inhabitants, God did of old

"Bid his angels turn askance
This oblique globe,"

thereby occasioning violent cold on one part, and violent heat on the other; he will, undoubtedly, then order them to restore it to its original position: so that there will be a final end, on the one hand, of the burning heat, which makes some parts of it scarce habitable; and on the other, of

"The rage of Arctos and eternal frost."

15. And it will then contain no jarring or destructive principles within its own bosom. It will no more have any of those violent convulsions in its own bowels. It will no more be shaken or torn asunder, by the impetuous force of earthquakes; and will, therefore, need neither Vesuvius, nor Etna, nor any burning mountains to prevent them. There will be no more horrid rocks, or frightful precipices; no wild deserts, or barren sands; no impassable morasses, or unfruitful bogs, to swallow up the unwary traveller. There will, doubtless, be inequalities on the surface of the earth; which are not blemishes, but beauties. And though I will not affirm, that

"Earth hath this variety from heaven,
Of pleasure situate in hill and dale;"

yet I cannot think gently rising hills will be any defect, but an ornament, of the new made earth. And doubtless we shall then likewise have occasion to say;

"Lo, there his wondrous skill arrays
The fields in cheerful green!
A thousand herbs his hand displays,
A thousand flowers between!"

16. And what will the general produce of the earth be? Not thorns, briars, or thistles; not any useless or fetid weed; not any poisonous, hurtful, or unpleasant plant; but every one that can be conducive, in any wise, either to our use or pleasure. How far beyond all that the most lively imagination is now able to conceive! We shall no more regret the loss of the terrestrial paradise, or sigh at that well devised description of our great poet:

"Then shall this mount
Of paradise, by might of waves, be moved
Out of his place, push'd by the horned flood,
With all its verdure spoil'd and trees adrift,
Down the great river to the opening gulf,
And there take root, an island salt and bare!"

For all the earth shall be a more beautiful paradise than Adam ever saw.

17. Such will be the state of the new earth with regard to the meaner, the inanimate parts of it. But great as this change will be, it is nothing in comparison of that which will then take place throughout all animated nature. In the living part of the creation were seen the most deplorable effects of Adam's apostasy. The whole animated creation, whatever has life, from leviathan to the smallest mite, was thereby made subject to such vanity, as the inanimate creatures could not be. They were subject to that fell monster, DEATH, the conqueror of

all that breathe. They were made subject to its forerunner, pain, in its ten thousand forms; although "God made not death, neither hath he pleasure in the death of any living." How many millions of creatures in the sea, in the air, and on every part of the earth, can now no otherwise preserve their lives, than by taking away the lives of others; by tearing in pieces and devouring their poor, innocent, unresisting fellow creatures! Miserable lot of such innumerable multitudes, who, insignificant as they seem, are the offspring of one common Father; the creatures of the same God of love! It is probable not only two thirds of the animal creation, but ninety-nine parts of a hundred, are under a necessity of destroying others in order to preserve their own life! But it shall not always be so. He that sitteth upon the throne will soon change the face of all things, and give a demonstrative proof to all his creatures, that "his mercy is over all his works." The horrid state of things which at present obtains, will soon be at an end. On the new earth, no creature will kill, or hurt, or give pain to any other. The scorpion will have no poisonous sting; the adder, no venomous teeth. The lion will have no claws to tear the lamb; no teeth to grind his flesh and bones. Nay, no creature, no beast, bird, or fish, will have any inclination to hurt any other; for cruelty will be far away, and savageness and fierceness be forgotten. So that violence shall be heard no more, neither wasting or destruction seen on the face of the earth. "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb," (the words may be literally as well as figuratively understood,) "and the leopard shall lie down with the kid: they shall not hurt or destroy," from the rising up of the sun, to the going down of the same.

18. But the most glorious of all will be, the change which then will take place on the poor, sinful, miserable children of men. These had fallen in many respects, as from a greater height, so into a lower depth, than any other part of the creation. But they shall "hear a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men: and he will dwell with them; and they shall be his people; and God himself shall be their God," Rev. xxi, 3, 4. Hence will arise an unmixed state of holiness and happiness, far superior to that which Adam enjoyed in paradise. In how beautiful a manner is this described by the apostle: "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying: neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are done away." As there will be no more death, and no more pain or sickness preparatory thereto; as there will be no more grieving for, or parting with friends; so there will be no more sorrow or crying. Nay, but there will be a greater deliverance than all this; for there will be no more sin. And, to crown all, there will be a deep, an intimate, an uninterrupted union with God; a constant communion with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, through the Spirit; a continual enjoyment of the Three-One God, and of all the creatures in him!

SERMON LXX.—*The Duty of Reproving our Neighbour.*

"Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him," Lev. xix, 17.

A GREAT part of the book of Exodus, and almost the whole of the book of Leviticus, relate to the ritual or ceremonial law of Moses; which was peculiarly given to the children of Israel, but was such "a yoke," says the apostle Peter, "as neither our fathers nor we were able to bear." We are, therefore, delivered from it: and this is one branch of "the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free." Yet it is easy to observe, that many excellent moral precepts are interspersed among these ceremonial laws. Several of them we find in this very chapter: such as, "Thou shalt not gather every grape in thy vineyard: thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger. I am the Lord your God," verse 10. "Ye shall not steal, neither lie one to another," verse 11. "Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him: the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee till the morning," verse 13. "Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling block before the blind: but thou shalt fear thy God: I am the Lord," verse 14. As if he had said, I am he whose eyes are over all the earth, and whose ears are open to their cry. "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the persons of the poor," which compassionate men may be tempted to do, "nor honour the person of the mighty," to which there are a thousand temptations, verse 15. "Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale bearer among thy people," verse 16: although this is a sin which human laws have never yet been able to prevent. Then follows, "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him."

In order to understand this important direction aright, and to apply it profitably to our own souls, let us consider,

I. What it is that we are to rebuke or reprove? What is the thing that is here enjoined?

II. Who are they whom we are commanded to reprove? And,

III. How are we to reprove them?

I. 1. Let us consider, first, What is the duty that is here enjoined? What is it we are to rebuke or reprove? And what is it to reprove? To tell any one of his faults; as clearly appears from the following words: "Thou shalt not suffer sin upon him." Sin is therefore the thing we are called to reprove, or rather him that commits sin. We are to do all that in us lies to convince him of his fault, and lead him into the right way.

2. Love indeed requires us to warn him, not only of sin, (although of this chiefly,) but likewise of any error, which, if it were persisted in, would naturally lead to sin. If we do not "hate him in our heart," if we love our neighbour as ourselves, this will be our constant endeavour; to warn him of every evil way, and of every mistake which tends to evil.

3. But if we desire not to lose our labour, we should rarely reprove any one for any one thing that is of a disputable nature; that will bear much to be said on both sides. A thing may possibly appear evil to me; therefore I scruple the doing of it: and if I were to do it while that scruple remains, I should be a sinner before God: but another is

not to be judged by my conscience: to his own Master he standeth or falleth. Therefore I would not reprove him, but for what is clearly and undeniably evil. Such, for instance, is profane cursing and swearing; which even those who practise it most, will not often venture to defend, if one mildly expostulates with them. Such is drunkenness; which even an habitual drunkard will condemn when he is sober. And such, in the account of the generality of people, is the profaning of the Lord's day. And if any who are guilty of these sins, for a while attempt to defend them, very few will persist to do it, if you look them steadily in the face, and appeal to their own conscience in the sight of God.

II. 1. Let us, in the second place, consider, Who are those that we are called to reprove? It is the more needful to consider this, because it is affirmed by many serious persons, that there are some sinners whom the Scripture itself forbids us to reprove. This sense has been put on that solemn caution of our Lord, in his sermon on the mount: "Cast not your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under foot, and turn again and rend you." But the plain meaning of these words is, Do not offer the pearls, the sublime doctrines or mysteries of the gospel, to those whom you know to be brutish men, immersed in sins, and having no fear of God before their eyes. This would expose those precious jewels to contempt, and yourselves to injurious treatment. But even those whom we know to be, in our Lord's sense, dogs and swine, if we saw them do, or heard them speak, what they themselves know to be evil, we ought in any wise to reprove; else we "hate our brother in our heart."

2. The persons intended by our "neighbour" are, every child of man; every one that breathes the vital air; all that have souls to be saved. And if we refrain from performing this office of love to any, because they are sinners above other men, they may persist in their iniquity, but their blood will God require at our hands.

3. How striking is Mr. Baxter's reflection on this head, in his "Saints' Everlasting Rest:" "Suppose thou wert to meet one in the lower world, to whom thou hadst denied this office of love, when ye were both together under the sun; what answer couldst thou make to his upbraiding? At such a time and place, while we were under the sun, God delivered me into thy hands: I then did not know the way of salvation, but was seeking death in the error of my life; and therein thou sufferedst me to remain, without once endeavouring to awake me out of sleep! Hadst thou imparted to me thy knowledge, and warned me to flee from the wrath to come, neither I nor thou need ever to have come into this place of torment."

4. Every one, therefore, that has a soul to be saved, is entitled to this good office from thee. Yet this does not imply, that it is to be done in the same degree to every one. It cannot be denied, that there are some to whom it is particularly due. Such, in the first place, are our parents, if we have any that stand in need of it; unless we should place our consorts and our children on an equal footing with them. Next to these we may rank our brothers and sisters, and afterwards our relations, as they are allied to us in a nearer or more distant manner, either by blood or by marriage. Immediately after these are our servants, whether bound to us for a term of years, or any shorter term. Lastly, such, in their several degrees, are our countrymen, our fellow

citizens, and the members of the same society, whether civil or religious: the latter have a particular claim to our service; seeing these societies are formed with that very design,—to watch over each other for this very end, that we may not suffer sin upon our brother. If we neglect to reprove any of these, when a fair opportunity offers, we are undoubtedly to be ranked among those that "hate their brother in their heart." And how severe is the sentence of the apostle against those who fall under this condemnation! "He that hateth his brother," though it does not break out into words or actions, "is a murderer:" "and ye know," continues the apostle, "that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." He hath not that seed planted in his soul, which groweth up unto everlasting life: in other words, he is in such a state, that if he dies therein, he cannot see life. It plainly follows, that to neglect this is no small thing, but eminently endangers our final salvation.

III. We have seen what is meant by reproving our brother, and who those are that we should reprove. But the principal thing remains to be considered: how, in what manner, are we to reprove them?

1. It must be allowed, that there is a considerable difficulty in performing this in a right manner: although, at the same time, it is far less difficult to some than it is to others. Some there are, who are particularly qualified for it, whether by nature, or practice, or grace. They are not encumbered either with evil shame, or that sore burden, the fear of man: they are both ready to undertake this labour of love, and skilful in performing it. To these, therefore, it is little or no cross; nay, they have a kind of relish for it, and a satisfaction therein, over and above that which arises from a consciousness of having done their duty. But be it a cross to us, greater or less, we know that hereunto we are called. And be the difficulty ever so great to us, we know in whom we have trusted; and that he will surely fulfil his word, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be."

2. In what manner, then, shall we reprove our brother, in order that our reproof may be most effectual? Let us first of all take care, that whatever we do, may be done in "the spirit of *love*;" in the spirit of tender good will to our neighbour; as for one who is the son of our common Father, and one for whom Christ died, that he might be a partaker of salvation. Then, by the grace of God, love will beget love. The affection of the speaker will spread to the heart of the hearer; and you will find, in due time, that your labour hath not been in vain in the Lord.

3. Meantime, the greatest care must be taken, that you speak in the spirit of *humility*. Beware that you do not think of yourself more highly than you ought to think. If you think too highly of yourself, you can scarce avoid despising your brother. And if you show, or even feel, the least contempt of those whom you reprove, it will blast your whole work, and occasion you to lose all your labour. In order to prevent the very appearance of pride, it will be often needful to be explicit on the head; to disclaim all preferring yourself before him; and at the very time you reprove that which is evil, to own and bless God for that which is good in him.

4. Great care must be taken, in the third place, to speak in the spirit of *meekness*, as well as lowliness. The apostle assures us, "that the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." Anger, though

it be adorned with the name of zeal, begets anger; not love or holiness. We should therefore avoid, with all possible care, the very appearance of it. Let there be no trace of it, either in the eyes, the gesture, or the tone of voice; but let these concur in manifesting a loving, humble, and dispassionate spirit.

5. But all this time, see that you do not trust in yourself. Put no confidence in your own wisdom, or address, or abilities of any kind. For the success of all you speak or do, trust not in yourself, but in the great author of every good and perfect gift. Therefore, while you are speaking, continually lift up your heart to Him that worketh all in all. And whatsoever is spoken in the spirit of *prayer*, will not fall to the ground.

6. So much for the *spirit* wherewith you should speak, when you reprove your neighbour. I now proceed to the *outward* manner. It has been frequently found, that the prefacing a reproof with a frank profession of good will, has caused what was spoken to sink deep into the heart. This will generally have a far better effect, than that grand fashionable engine, flattery, by means of which, the men of the world have often done surprising things. But the very same things, yea, far greater, have much oftener been effected, by a plain and artless declaration of disinterested love. When you feel God has kindled this flame in your heart, hide it not: give it full vent! It will pierce like lightning. The stout, the hard hearted, will melt before you, and know that God is with you of a truth.

7. Although it is certain that the main point in reproving is, to do it with a right spirit, yet it must also be allowed, there are several little circumstances with regard to the outward manner, which are by no means without their use; and therefore are not to be despised. One of these is, whenever you reprove, do it with great *seriousness;* so that as you really are in earnest, you may likewise appear so to be. A ludicrous reproof makes little impression, and is soon forgot: besides, that many times it is taken ill, as if you ridiculed the person you reprove. And indeed those who are not accustomed to make jests, do not take it well to be jested upon. One means of giving a serious air to what you speak, is, as often as may be, to use the very words of Scripture. Frequently, we find the word of God, even in a private conversation, has a peculiar energy; and the sinner, when he expects it least, feels it "sharper than a two-edged sword."

8. Yet there are some exceptions to this general rule of reproving seriously. There are some exempt cases, wherein, as a good judge of human nature observes,

Ridiculum acri fortius:

A little well placed raillery will pierce deeper than solid argument. But this has place chiefly, when we have to do with those who are strangers to religion. And when we condescend to give a ludicrous reproof to a person of this character, it seems we are authorized so to do, by that advice of Solomon: "Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes."

9. The manner of the reproof may, in other respects too, be varied according to the occasion. Sometimes you may find it proper to use many words to express your sense at large. At other times, you may judge it more expedient, to use few words; perhaps a single sentence;

and at others, it may be advisable to use no words at all, but a gesture, a sigh, or a look, particularly when the person you would reprove is greatly your superior. And frequently, this kind of reproof will be attended by the power of God; and, consequently, have a far better effect than a long and laboured discourse.

10. Once more: remember the remark of Solomon, "A word spoken in season, how good is it!" It is true, if you are providentially called to reprove any one, whom you are not likely to see any more, you are to snatch the present opportunity, and to "speak in season," or "out of season;" but with them whom you have frequent opportunities of seeing, you may wait for a fair occasion. Here the advice of the poet has place. You may speak

Si validus, si lætus erit, si denique poscit:

When he is in a good humour, or when he asks it you. Here you may catch the

Mollia tempora fandi,—

time when his mind is in a soft, mild frame: and then God will both teach you how to speak, and give a blessing to what is spoken.

11. But here let me guard against one mistake. It passes for an indisputable maxim, "Never attempt to reprove a man when he is intoxicated with drink." Reproof, it is said, is then thrown away, and can have no good effect. I dare not say so. I have seen not a few clear instances of the contrary. Take one: Many years ago, passing by a man in Moorfields, who was so drunk he could hardly stand, I put a paper into his hand. He looked at it, and said, "A word—a word to a Drunkard,—that is me,—sir, sir! I am wrong,—I know I am wrong,—pray let me talk a little with you." He held me by the hand a full half hour: and I believe he got drunk no more.

12. I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, do not despise poor drunkards! Have compassion on them! Be instant with them in season and out of season! Let not shame, or fear of men, prevent your pulling these brands out of the burning: many of them are self condemned:

"Nor do they not discern the evil plight
That they are in;"

but they despair; they have no hope of escaping out of it; and they sink into it still deeper, because none else has any hope for them! "Sinners of every other sort," said a venerable old clergyman, "have I frequently known converted to God. But an habitual drunkard have I never known converted." But I have known five hundred, perhaps five thousand. Ho! Art thou one who readest these words? Then hear thou the words of the Lord! I have a message from God unto thee, oh sinner! Thus saith the Lord, Cast not away thy hope. I have not forgotten thee. He that tells thee, "There is no help," is a liar from the beginning! Look up! Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world! This day is salvation come to thy soul: only see that thou despise not him that speaketh! Just now he saith unto thee, "Son, be of good cheer! Thy sins are forgiven thee!"

13. Lastly: you that are diligent in this labour of love, see that you be not discouraged; although, after you have used your best endeavours, you should see no present fruit. You have need of patience, and then, "after ye have done the will of God" herein, the harvest will come.

Never be "weary of well doing: in due time ye shall reap if ye faint not." Copy after Abraham, who "against hope, still believed in hope." "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days."

14. I have now only a few words to add unto you, my brethren, who are vulgarly called Methodists. I never heard or read of any considerable revival of religion, which was not attended with a spirit of reproving. I believe it cannot be otherwise; for what is faith, unless it worketh by love? Thus it was in every part of England, when the present revival of religion began, about fifty years ago: all the subjects of that revival, all the Methodists, so called, in every place, were reprovers of outward sin. And indeed so are all that, "being justified by faith, have peace with God through Jesus Christ." Such they are at first; and if they use that precious gift, it will never be taken away. Come, brethren, in the name of God, let us begin again! Rich or poor, let us all arise as one man! And in any wise, let every man "rebuke his neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him!" Then shall all Great Britain and Ireland know, that we do not "go a warfare at our own cost:" yea, "God shall bless us, and all the ends of the world shall fear him."

SERMON LXXI.—*The Signs of the Times.*

"Ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?" Matt. xvi, 3.

1. THE entire passage runs thus: "The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would show them a sign from heaven. He answered and said, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowering. Oh ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?"

2. "The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came:" In general, these were quite opposite to each other: but it is no uncommon thing for the children of the world to lay aside their opposition to each other, (at least for a season,) and cordially to unite in opposing the children of God "And tempting;" that is, making a trial whether he was indeed sent of God; "desired him that he would show them a sign from heaven;" which they believed no false prophet was able to do. It is not improbable, they imagined, this would convince them, that he was really sent from God. "He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowering." Probably there were more certain signs of fair and foul weather in their climate, than there are in ours. "Oh ye hypocrites;" making profession of love, while you have enmity in your hearts; "ye can discern the face of the sky," and judge thereby what the weather will be; "but can ye not discern the signs of the times," when God brings his first begotten Son into the world?

3. Let us more particularly inquire, first, What were the times, whereof our Lord here speaks; and what were the signs, whereby those times were to be distinguished from all others? We may then inquire, second-

ly, What are the times which we have reason to believe are *now* at hand; and how is it, that all who are called Christians, do not discern the signs of *these* times?

I. 1. Let us, in the first place, inquire, What times were those concerning which our Lord is here speaking? It is easy to answer; the times of the Messiah; the times ordained before the foundation of the world, wherein it pleased God to give his only begotten Son, to take our nature upon him, to be "found in fashion as a man," to live a life of sorrow and pain, and, at length, to be "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," to the end that "whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This was the important time, the signs whereof the Pharisees and Sadducees could not discern. Clear as they were in themselves, yet so thick a veil was upon the heart of these men, that they did not discern the tokens of his coming, though foretold so long before.

2. But what were those signs of the coming of that Just One, which had been so long and so clearly foretold, and whereby they might easily have discerned those times, had not the veil been on their heart? They are many in number; but it may suffice to mention a few of them. One of the first is that pointed out in the solemn words, spoken by Jacob a little before his death: Gen. xlix, 10, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come." All, both ancient and modern Jews, agree, that by Shiloh we are to understand the Messiah; who was therefore to come, according to the prophecy, "before the sceptre," that is, the sovereignty, "departed from Judah." But it did, without controversy, depart from Judah, at this very time;—an infallible sign, that at this very time Shiloh, that is, the Messiah, came.

3. A second eminent sign of those times, the times of the coming of the Messiah, is given us in the third chapter of the prophecy of Malachi; "Behold, I send my messenger, and he shall prepare my way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple," verse 1. How manifestly was this fulfilled, first, by the coming of John the Baptist; and then by our blessed Lord himself, "coming suddenly to his temple!" And what sign could be clearer to those that impartially considered the words of the prophet Isaiah, chap. xl, ver. 3, "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight!"

4. But yet clearer signs than these, (if any could be clearer,) were the mighty works that he wrought. Accordingly, he himself declares, "The works which I do, they testify of me." And to these he explicitly appeals in his answer to the question of John the Baptist; (not proposed, as some have strangely imagined, from any doubt which he had himself; but from a desire of confirming his disciples, who might possibly waver, when their Master was taken from their head: "Art thou he that should come," the Messiah? "Or look we for another?" No bare verbal answer could have been so convincing, as what they saw with their own eyes. Jesus therefore referred them to this testimony: "He answered and said unto them, Go, and show John the things which ye hear and see; the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them," Matt. xi. 4, 5

5. But how then came it to pass, that those who were so sharp-sighted in other things, who could "discern the face of the sky," were not able to discern those signs which indicated the coming of the Messiah? They could not discern them, not for want of evidence,—this was full and clear,—but for want of integrity in themselves; because they were a "wicked and adulterous generation;" because the perverseness of their hearts spread a cloud over their understanding. Therefore, although the Sun of Righteousness shone bright, yet they were insensible of it. They were not willing to be convinced: therefore they remained in ignorance. The light was sufficient; but they shut their eyes, that they might not see it: so that they were without excuse, till vengeance came upon them to the uttermost.

II. 1. We are in the second place to consider, What are the times which we have reason to believe are *now* at hand? And how is it that all who are called Christians, do not discern the signs of *these* times?

The times which we have reason to believe are at hand, (if they are not already begun,) are what many pious men have termed, the time of "the latter day glory;"—meaning, the time wherein God would gloriously display his power and love, in the fulfilment of his gracious promise that "the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea."

2. "But are there in England, or in any part of the world, any *signs* of such a time approaching?" It is not many years since, that a person of considerable learning, as well as eminence in the church, (then bishop of London,) in his pastoral letter, made this observation: "I cannot imagine what persons mean, by talking of *a great work of God* at this time. I do not see any work of God now, more than has been at any other time." I believe it: I believe that great man did not see any extraordinary work of God. Neither he, nor the generality of Christians, so called, saw any signs of the glorious day that is approaching. But how is this to be accounted for? How is it that those who can now "discern the face of the sky," who are not only great philosophers, but great divines, as eminent as ever the Sadducees, yea, or the Pharisees were, do not discern the signs of those glorious times, which, if not begun, are nigh even at the door?

3. We allow, indeed, that in every age of the church, "the kingdom of God came not with observation;" not with splendour and pomp, or with any of those outward circumstances which usually attend the kingdoms of this world. We allow this "kingdom of God is within us;" and that, consequently, when it begins, either in an individual or in a nation, it "is like a grain of mustard seed," which at first "is the least of all seeds," but, nevertheless, gradually increases, till "it becomes a great tree." Or, to use the other comparison of our Lord, it is like "a little leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened."

4. But may it not be asked, "Are there now any signs that the day of God's power is approaching?" I appeal to every candid, unprejudiced person, whether we may not, at this day, discern all those signs, (understanding the words in a spiritual sense,) to which our Lord referred John's disciples? "The blind receive their sight:" those who were blind from their birth, unable to see their own deplorable state, and much more to see God, and the remedy he has prepared for them

in the Son of his love, now see themselves, yea, and "the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." The eyes of their understanding being now opened, they see all things clearly.—"The deaf hear:" those that were before utterly deaf, to all the outward and inward calls of God, now hear, not only his providential calls, but also the whispers of his grace.—"The lame walk:" those who never before arose from the earth, or moved one step towards heaven, are now walking in all the ways of God; yea, "running the race that is set before them."—"The lepers are cleansed:" the deadly leprosy of sin, which they brought with them into the world, and which no art of man could ever cure, is now clean departed from them. And surely never in any age or nation, since the apostles, have those words been so eminently fulfilled, "The poor have the gospel preached unto them," as it is at this day. At this day the gospel leaven, faith working by love,—inward and outward holiness,—or, (to use the terms of St. Paul,) "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,"—hath so spread in various parts of Europe, particularly in England, Scotland, Ireland, in the islands, in the north and south, from Georgia to New-England, and Newfoundland, that sinners have been truly converted to God, thoroughly changed both in heart and in life; not by tens, or by hundreds only, but by thousands, yea, by myriads! The fact cannot be denied: we can point out the persons, with their names and places of abode. And yet the wise men of the world, the men of eminence, the men of learning and renown, "cannot imagine what we mean by talking of any extraordinary work of God!" They cannot discern the signs of *these times!* They can see no sign at all of God's arising to maintain his own cause, and set up his kingdom over the earth!

5. But how may this be accounted for? How is it, that they cannot discern the signs of these times? We may account for their want of discernment on the same principle we accounted for that of the Pharisees and Sadducees; namely, that they likewise are, what those were, an "adulterous and sinful generation." If their eye was single, their whole body would be full of light: but suppose their eye be evil, their whole body must be full of darkness. Every evil temper darkens the soul; every evil passion clouds the understanding. How then can we expect, that those should be able to discern the signs of the times, who are full of all disorderly passions, and slaves to every evil temper? But this is really the case. They are full of pride: they think of themselves far more highly than they ought to think. They are vain: they "seek honour one of another, and not the honour that cometh of God only." They cherish hatred and malice in their hearts: they give place to anger, to envy, to revenge: they return evil for evil, and railing for railing. Instead of overcoming evil with good, they make no scruple of demanding an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. They "savour not the things that are of God, but the things that are of men." They set their affections, not on things above, but on the things that are of the earth. They "love the creature more than the Creator;" they are "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." How then should they discern the signs of the times? The god of this world, whom they serve, has blinded their hearts, and covered their minds with a veil of thick darkness. Alas! what have these "souls of flesh and blood," (as one speaks) to do with God, or the things of God?

6. St. John assigns this very reason for the Jews not understanding the things of God; namely, that in consequence of their preceding sins, and wilful rejecting the light, God had now delivered them up to Satan, who had blinded them past recovery. Over and over, when they might have seen, they would not; they shut their eyes against the light: and now they cannot see, God having given them up to an undiscerning mind: therefore they do not believe, because that Isaiah said, (that is, because of the reason given in that saying of Isaiah,) "He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, and be converted, and I should heal them." The plain meaning is, not that God did this by his own immediate power; it would be flat blasphemy to say, that God, in this sense, hardens any man; but his Spirit strives with them no longer, and then Satan hardens them effectually.

7. And as it was with them in ancient times, so it is with the present generation. Thousands of those who bear the name of Christ are now given up to an undiscerning mind. The god of this world hath so blinded their eyes, that the light cannot shine upon them; so that they can no more discern the signs of the times, than the Pharisees and Sadducees could of old. A wonderful instance of this spiritual blindness, this total inability to discern the signs of the times mentioned in Scripture, is given us in the very celebrated work of a late eminent writer; who supposes, the New Jerusalem came down from heaven, when Constantine the Great called himself a Christian. I say, *called himself a Christian;* for I dare not affirm that he *was one*, any more than Peter the Great. I cannot but believe, he would have come nearer the mark, if he had said, that it was the time when a huge cloud of infernal brimstone and smoke came up from the bottomless pit! For surely there never was a time wherein Satan gained so fatal an advantage over the church of Christ, as when such a flood of riches, and honour, and power, broke in upon it, particularly on the clergy!

8. By the same rule, what signs would this writer have expected of the approaching conversion of the heathens? He would doubtless, have expected a hero, like Charles of Sweden, or Frederick of Prussia, to carry fire, and sword, and Christianity, through whole nations at once! And it cannot be denied, that since the time of Constantine, many nations have been converted in this way. But could it be said concerning such conversions as these; "The kingdom of heaven cometh not with observation?" Surely every one must observe a warrior rushing through the land, at the head of fifty or sixty thousand men! But is this the way of spreading Christianity, which the Author of it, the Prince of Peace, has chosen? Nay, it is not in this manner that a grain of mustard seed grows up into a great tree. It is not thus that a little leaven leavens the whole lump. Rather, it spreads by degrees farther and farther, till the whole is leavened. We may form a judgment of what will be hereafter, by what we have seen already. And this is the way wherein true Christian religion, the faith that worketh by love, has been spreading, particularly through Great Britain and its dependencies, for half a century.

9. In the same manner it continues to spread at the present time also, as may easily appear to all those whose eyes are not blinded. All those that experience in their own hearts the power of God unto salvation

will readily perceive now the same religion which they enjoy, is still spreading from heart to heart. They take knowledge of the same grace of God, strongly and sweetly working on every side; and rejoice to find another and another sinner, first inquiring, "What must I do to be saved?"—and then testifying, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit doth rejoice in God my Saviour." Upon a fair and candid inquiry, they find more and more, not only of those who had some form of religion, but of those who had no form at all, who were profligate, abandoned sinners, now entirely changed, truly fearing God and working righteousness. They observe more and more, even of these poor outcasts of men, who are inwardly and outwardly changed; loving God and their neighbour; living in the uniform practice of justice, mercy, and truth; as they have time, doing good to all men; easy and happy in their lives, and triumphant in their death.

10. What excuse, then, have any that believe the Scriptures to be the word of God, for not discerning the signs of these times, as preparatory to the general call of the heathens? What could God have done which he hath not done, to convince you that the day is coming, that the time is at hand, when he will fulfil his glorious promises; when he will arise to maintain his own cause, and to set up his kingdom over all the earth? What, indeed, unless he had *forced* you to believe? And this he could not do, without destroying the nature which he had given you: for he made you free agents; having an inward power of self determination, which is essential to your nature. And he deals with you as free agents, from first to last. As such, you may shut or open your eyes, as you please. You have sufficient light shining all around you; yet you need not see it unless you will. But be assured, God is not well pleased with your shutting your eyes, and then saying, "I cannot see." I counsel you to bestow an impartial examination upon the whole affair. After a candid inquiry into matter of fact, consider deeply, "What hath God wrought?" "Who hath seen such a thing? Who hath heard such a thing?" Hath not a nation, as it were, been "born in a day?" How swift, as well as how deep, and how extensive a work has been wrought in the present age! And certainly, "not by might, neither by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord." For how utterly inadequate were the means! How insufficient were the instruments to work any such effect;—at least, those which it has pleased God to make use of in the British dominions and in America! By how unlikely instruments has God been pleased to work from the beginning! "A few young raw heads," said the bishop of London, "what can they pretend to do?" They pretended to be *that* in the hand of God, that a pen is in the hand of a man. They pretended, (and do so at this day,) to do the work whereunto they are sent; to do just what the Lord pleased. And if it be his pleasure, to throw down the walls of Jericho, the strong holds of Satan, not by the engines of war, but by the blasts of rams' horns, who shall say unto him, "What doest thou?"

11. Meantime, "blessed are your eyes, for they see: many prophets and righteous men have desired to see the things you see, and have not seen them, and to hear the things that you hear, and have not heard them." You see and acknowledge the day of your visitation; such a visitation as neither you nor your fathers had known. You may well say, "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and

be glad therein." You see the dawn of that glorious day, whereof all the prophets have spoken. And how shall you most effectually improve this day of your visitation?

12. The first point is, see that you yourselves receive not the blessing of God in vain. Begin at the root, if you have not already. Now repent, and believe the gospel! If you have believed, "look to yourselves, that ye lose not what you have wrought, but that ye receive a full reward!" Stir up the gift of God that is within you! Walk in the light as he is in the light! And while you "hold fast that which you have attained, go on unto perfection!" Yea, and when you are "made perfect in love," still, "forgetting the things that are behind, press on to the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus!"

13. It behoves you, in the next place, to help your neighbours. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." As you have time, do good unto all men, but especially unto them that are of the household of faith. Proclaim the glad tidings of salvation ready to be revealed, not only to those of your own household, not only to your relations, friends, and acquaintance, but to all whom God providentially delivers into your hands! "Ye," who already know in whom you have believed, "are the salt of the earth." Labour to season, with the knowledge and love of God, all that you have any intercourse with! "Ye are as a city set upon a hill;" ye cannot, ye ought not to be hid. "Ye are the light of the world: men do not light a candle, and put it under a bushel;" how much less the all wise God! No; let it shine to all that are in the house; all that are witnesses of your life and conversation. Above all, continue instant in prayer, both for yourselves, for all the church of God, and for all the children of men, that they may remember themselves, and be turned unto our God, that they likewise may enjoy the gospel blessing on earth, and the glory of God in heaven!

SERMON LXXII.—*On Divine Providence.*

"Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered," Luke xii, 7.

1. THE doctrine of Divine providence has been received by wise men in all ages. It was believed by many of the eminent heathens, not only philosophers, but orators and poets. Innumerable are the testimonies concerning it, which are scattered up and down in their writings, agreeable to that well-known saying in Cicero, "*Deorum moderamine cuncta geri:*" that all things, all events in this world, are under the management of God. We might bring a cloud of witnesses to confirm this, were any so hardy as to deny it.

2. The same truth is acknowledged at this day in most parts of the world: yea, even by those nations which are so barbarous as not to know the use of letters. So when Paustoobee, an Indian chief, of the Chicasaw nation in North America, was asked, "Why do you think the Beloved Ones (so they term God,) take care of *you?*" he answered, without any hesitation, "I was in the battle with the French; and the bullet went on this side, and the bullet went on that side; and this man

died, and that man died; but I am alive still; and by this I know that the Beloved Ones take care of me."

3. But although the ancient as well as modern heathens had some conception of a divine providence, yet the conceptions which most of them entertained concerning it were dark, confused, and imperfect: yea, the accounts which the most enlightened among them gave, were usually contradictory to each other. Add to this, that they were by no means assured of the truth of those very accounts: they hardly dared to affirm any thing; but spoke with the utmost caution and diffidence: insomuch that what Cicero himself, the author of that noble declaration, ventures to affirm in cool blood, at the end of his long dispute upon the subject, amounts to no more than this lame and impotent conclusion: *Mihi verisimilior videbatur Cottæ oratio:* "What Cotta said," (the person that argued in the defence of the being and providence of God,) "*seemed* to me *more probable*, than what his opponent had advanced to the contrary."

4. And it is no wonder: for only God himself can give a clear, consistent, perfect account, (that is, as perfect as our weak understanding can receive, in this our infant state of existence; or, at least, as is consistent with the designs of his government,) of his manner of governing the world. And this he hath done in his written word: all the oracles of God, all the Scriptures, both of the Old Testament and the New, describe so many scenes of divine providence. It is the beautiful remark of a fine writer, "Those who object to the Old Testament in particular, that it is not a connected history of nations, but only a congeries of broken, unconnected events, do not observe the nature and design of these writings. They do not see, that Scripture is *the history of* God." Those who bear this upon their minds, will easily perceive, that the inspired writers never lose sight of it; but preserve one unbroken, connected chain from the beginning to the end. All over that wonderful book, as "life and immortality" (immortal life) is gradually "brought to light," so is Immanuel, God with us, and his kingdom ruling over all.

5. In the verses preceding the text, our Lord has been arming his disciples against the fear of man. "Be not afraid," says he, verse 4, "of them that can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." He guards them against this fear, first, by reminding them of what was infinitely more terrible than any thing which man could inflict: "Fear him, who after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell." He guards them farther against it, by the consideration of an overruling providence: "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?" Or, as the words are repeated by St. Matthew, with a very inconsiderable variation, chap. x, verse 29, "not one of them shall fall to the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered."

6. We must indeed observe, that this strong expression, though repeated by both the evangelists, need not imply, (though if any one thinks it does, he may think so very innocently,) that God does literally number all the hairs that are on the heads of all his creatures: but it is a proverbial expression, implying, that nothing is so small or insignificant in the sight of men, as not to be an object of the care and pro-

vidence of God; before whom nothing is small that concerns the happiness of any of his creatures.

7. There is scarce any doctrine in the whole compass of revelation, which is of deeper importance than this. And, at the same time, there is scarce any that is so little regarded, and perhaps so little understood. Let us endeavour then, with the assistance of God, to examine it to the bottom; to see upon what foundation it stands, and what it properly implies.

8. The eternal, almighty, all-wise, all-gracious God, is the Creator of heaven and earth: he called out of nothing, by his all-powerful word, the whole universe; all that is. "Thus the heavens and the earth were created, and all the hosts of them." And after he had set all things else in array, the plants after their kinds, fish and fowl, beasts and reptiles, after their kinds, "he created man after his own image." And the Lord saw, that every distinct part of the universe was good But when he saw every thing he had made; all things in connection one with another; "behold, it was very good."

9. And as this all-wise, all-gracious being created all things, so he sustains all things. He is the Preserver as well as the Creator of every thing that exists. "He upholdeth all things by the word of his power;" that is, by his powerful word. Now it must be that he knows every thing he has made, and every thing that he preserves from moment to moment; otherwise he could not preserve it: he could not continue to it the being which he has given it. And it is nothing strange that he who is omnipresent, who "filleth heaven and earth," who is in every place, should see what is in every place, where he is intimately present. If the eye of man discerns things at a small distance; the eye of an eagle, what is at a greater; the eye of an angel, what is at a thousand times greater distance; (perhaps taking in the surface of the earth at one view;) how shall not the eye of God see every thing, through the whole extent of creation? Especially considering, that nothing is distant from him, in whom we all "live, and move, and have our being."

10. It is true, our narrow understandings but imperfectly comprehend this. But whether we comprehend it or no, we are certain that so it is. As certain as it is, that he created all things, and that he still sustains all that is created; so certain it is, that he is present, at all times, in all places; that he is above, beneath; that he "besets us behind and before," and, as it were, "lays his hand upon us." We allow, "such knowledge is too high" and wonderful for us; we "cannot attain unto it." The manner of his presence no man can explain, nor, probably, any angel in heaven. Perhaps what the ancient philosopher speaks of the soul, in regard to its residence in the body, that it is, *tota in toto, et tota in qualibet parte*, might, in some sense, be spoken of the omnipresent Spirit, in regard to the universe: that he is not only "all in the whole, but all in every part." Be this as it may, it cannot be doubted but he sees every atom of his creation; and that a thousand times more clearly, than we see the things that are close to us: even of these, we see only the surface, while he sees the inmost essence of every thing.

11. The omnipresent God sees and knows all the properties of the beings that he hath made. He knows all the connections, dependencies and relations, and all the ways wherein one of them can affect

another. In particular, he saw all the inanimate parts of the creation, whether in heaven above, or in the earth beneath. He knows how the stars, comets, or planets above, influence the inhabitants of the earth beneath; what influence the lower heavens, with their magazines of fire, hail, snow, and vapours, winds, and storms, have on our planet; and what effects may be produced in the bowels of the earth by fire, air, or water; what exhalations may be raised therefrom, and what changes wrought thereby; what effects every mineral or vegetable may have upon the children of men: all these lie naked and open to the eye of the Creator and Preserver of the universe!

12. He knows all the animals of the lower world, whether beasts, birds, fishes, reptiles, or insects: he knows all the qualities and powers he hath given them, from the highest to the lowest: he knows every good angel and every evil angel in every part of his dominions; and looks from heaven upon the children of men over the whole face of the earth. He knows all the hearts of the sons of men, and understands all their thoughts: he sees what any angel, any devil, any man, either thinks, or speaks, or does; yea, and all they feel: he sees all their sufferings, with every circumstance of them.

13. And is the Creator and Preserver of the world unconcerned in what he sees therein? Does he look upon these things either with a malignant or heedless eye? Is he an Epicurean god? Does he sit at ease in the heaven, without regarding the poor inhabitants of earth? It cannot be. He hath made us; not we ourselves; and he cannot despise the work of his own hands. We are his children: and can a mother forget the children of her womb? Yea, she may forget; yet will not God forget us! On the contrary, he hath expressly declared, that as his "eyes are over all the earth," so he "is loving to every man, and his mercy is over all his works." Consequently he is concerned every moment, for what befalls every creature upon earth; and more especially for every thing that befalls any of the children of men. It is hard, indeed, to comprehend this: nay, it is hard to believe it; considering the complicated wickedness, and the complicated misery, which we see on every side. But believe it we must, unless we will make God a liar; although it is sure, no man can comprehend it. It behoves us, then, to humble ourselves before God, and to acknowledge our ignorance. Indeed, how can we expect that a man should be able to comprehend the ways of God! Can a worm comprehend a worm? How much less can it be supposed, that a man can comprehend God!

"For how can finite measure infinite."

14. He is infinite in wisdom as well as in power: and all his wisdom is continually employed in managing all the affairs of his creation for the good of all his creatures. For his wisdom and goodness go hand in hand: they are inseparably united, and continually act in concert with almighty power, for the real good of all his creatures. His power being equal to his wisdom and goodness, continually co-operates with them. And to him all things are possible: he doeth whatsoever pleaseth him, in heaven and earth, and in the sea, and all deep places: and we cannot doubt of his exerting all his power, as in sustaining, so in governing all that he has made.

15. Only he that can do all things e se cannot deny himself: he can-

not counteract himself, or oppose his own work. Were it not for this, he would destroy all sin, with its attendant pain, in a moment. He would abolish wickedness out of his whole creation, and suffer no trace of it to remain. But in so doing he would counteract himself; he would altogether overturn his own work; and undo all that he has been doing, since he created man upon the earth. For he created man in his own image: a spirit like himself; a spirit endued with understanding, with will, or affections, and liberty; without which, neither his understanding nor his affections could have been of any use; neither would he have been capable either of vice or virtue. He could not be a moral agent, any more than a tree or a stone. If, therefore, God were thus to exert his power, there would certainly be no more vice; but it is equally certain, neither could there be any virtue in the world. Were human liberty taken away, men would be as incapable of virtue as stones. Therefore, (with reverence be it spoken,) the Almighty himself cannot do this thing. He cannot thus contradict himself, or undo what he has done. He cannot destroy, out of the soul of man, that image of himself, wherein he made him: and without doing this, he cannot abolish sin and pain out of the world. But were it to be done, it would imply no wisdom at all; but barely a stroke of Omnipotence. Whereas all the manifold wisdom of God (as well as all his power and goodness) is displayed in governing man as man; not as a stock or stone, but as an intelligent and free spirit, capable of choosing either good or evil. Herein appears the depth of the wisdom of God, in his adorable providence; in governing men, so as not to destroy either their understanding, will, or liberty. He commands all things, both in heaven and earth, to assist man in attaining the end of his being, in working out his own salvation; so far as it can be done, without compulsion, without overruling his liberty. An attentive inquirer may easily discern, the whole frame of divine providence is so constituted as to afford man every possible help, in order to his doing good and eschewing evil, which can be done without turning man into a machine; without making him incapable of virtue or vice, reward or punishment.

16. Meantime, it has been remarked by a pious writer, that there is, as he expresses it, a three-fold circle of divine providence, over and above that which presides over the whole universe. We do not now speak of that overruling hand, which governs the inanimate creation; which sustains the sun, moon, and stars in their stations, and guides their motions; we do not refer to his care of the animal creation, every part of which we know is under his government, "who giveth food unto the cattle, and feedeth the young ravens that call upon him;" but we here speak of that superintending providence which regards the children of men. Each of these is easily distinguished from the others, by those who accurately observe the ways of God. The outermost circle includes the whole race of mankind; all the descendants of Adam; all the human creatures that are dispersed over the face of the earth. This comprises not only the Christian world, those that name the name of Christ, but the Mohammedans also, who considerably outnumber even the nominal Christians; yea, and the heathens likewise, who very far outnumber the Mohammedans and Christians put together. "Is he the God of the Jews," says the apostle, "and not of the Gentiles also?" And so we may say, Is he the God of the Christians, and not of the Mohammed-

ans and heathens? Yea, doubtless of the Mohammedans and heathens also. His love is not confined: "The Lord is loving unto every man, and his mercy is over all his works." He careth for the very outcasts of men: it may ruly be said,

"Free as the air thy bounty streams
O'er all thy works: thy mercies' beams
Diffusive as thy sun's, arise."

17. Yet it may be admitted, that he takes more immediate care of those that are comprised in the second, the smaller circle; which includes all that are called Christians; all that profess to believe in Christ. We may reasonably think that these, in some degree, honour him, at least more than the heathens do: God does, likewise, in some measure, honour them, and has a nearer concern for them. By many instances it appears, that the prince of this world has not so full power over these as over the heathens. The God whom they even profess to serve, does, in some measure, maintain his own cause; so that the spirits of darkness do not reign so uncontrolled over them, as they do over the heathen world.

18. Within the third, the innermost circle, are contained only the real Christians: those that worship God, not in form only, but in spirit and in truth. Herein are comprised all that love God, or at least, truly fear God and work righteousness. All in whom is the mind which was in Christ, and who walk as Christ also walked. The words of our Lord above recited peculiarly refer to these. It is to these in particular that he says, "Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered." He sees their souls and their bodies; he takes particular notice of all their tempers, desires, and thoughts; all their words and actions. He marks all their sufferings, inward and outward, and the source whence they arise; so that we may well say,

"Thou knowest the pains thy servants feel,
Thou hearest thy children's cry;
And their best wishes to fulfil,
Thy grace is ever nigh."

Nothing relative to these is too great, nothing too little, for his attention. He has his eye continually, as upon every individual person that is a member of this his family, so upon every circumstance that relates either to their souls or bodies; either to their inward or outward state; wherein either their present or eternal happiness is in any degree concerned.

19. But what say the wise men of the world to this? They answer, with all readiness, "Who doubts of this? We are not Atheists. We all acknowledge a providence: that is, a general providence; for, indeed, the particular providence of which some talk, we know not what to make of: surely the little affairs of men are far beneath the regard of the great Creator and Governor of the Universe! Accordingly,

'He sees with equal eyes, as Lord of all,
A hero perish, or a sparrow fall.'"

Does he indeed? I cannot think it; because (whatever that fine poet did, or his patron, whom he so deeply despised, and yet grossly flattered,) I believe the Bible; wherein the Creator and Governor of the world himself tells me quite the contrary. That he has a tender regard for the brute creatures I know: he does, in a measure, "take care for

oxen:" he "provideth food for the cattle," as well as "herbs for the use of men." "The lions roaring after their prey, do seek their meat from God." "He openeth his hand, and filleth all things living with plenteousness."

"The various troops of sea and land,
In sense of common want agree;
All wait on thy dispensing hand,
And have their daily alms from thee.
They gather what thy stores disperse,
Without their trouble to provide:
Thou ope'st thy hand: the universe,
The craving world, is all supplied."

Our heavenly Father feedeth the fowls of the air: but mark! "Are not ye much better than they?" Shall he not then "much more feed you" who are pre-eminent by so much odds? He does not, in that sense, look upon *you* and *them* "with *equal* eyes;" set you on a level with *them;* least of all, does he set you on a level with brutes, in respect of life and death: "Right precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." Do you really think the death of a sparrow is equally precious in his sight? He tells us, indeed, that "not a sparrow falleth on the ground without our Father;" but he asks, at the same time, "Are ye not of more value than many sparrows?"

20. But in support of a general, in contradiction to a particular providence, the same elegant poet lays it down as an unquestionable maxim,

"The Universal Cause
Acts not by partial, but by general laws:"

Plainly meaning, that he never deviates from those general laws, in favour of any particular person. This is a common supposition; but which is altogether inconsistent with the whole tenor of Scripture: for if God never deviates from these general laws, then there never was a miracle in the world; seeing every miracle is a deviation from the general laws of nature. Did the Almighty confine himself to these general laws, when he divided the Red sea? When he commanded the waters to stand on a heap, and make a way for his redeemed to pass over? Did he act by general laws, when he caused the sun to stand still for the space of a whole day? No; nor in any of the miracles which are recorded either in the Old or New Testament.

21. But it is on supposition that the Governor of the world never deviates from those general laws, that Mr. Pope adds those beautiful lines in full triumph, as having now clearly gained the point:—

"Shall burning Etna, if a sage requires,
Forget to thunder, and recall her fires?
On air or sea new motions be imprest,
Oh blameless Bethel! to relieve thy breast!
When the loose mountain trembles from on high,
Shall gravitation cease, if you go by?
Or some old temple, nodding to its fall,
For Chartres' head reserve the hanging wall?"

We answer, if it please God to continue the life of any of his servants, he will suspend that or any other law of nature: the stone shall not fall; the fire shall not burn; the floods shall not flow; or, he will give his angels charge, and in their hands shall they bear him up, through and above all dangers!

22. Admitting, then, that in the common course of nature, God does act by general laws, he has never precluded himself from making exceptions to them, whensoever he pleases; either by suspending that law, in favour of those that love him, or by employing his mighty angels: by either of which means he can deliver out of all danger them that trust in him.

"What! You expect miracles then?" Certainly I do, if I believe the Bible: for the Bible teaches me, that God hears and answers prayer: but every answer to prayer is, properly, a miracle. For if natural causes take their course, if things go on in their natural way, it is no answer at all. Gravitation therefore shall cease, that is, cease to operate, whenever the author of it pleases. Cannot the men of the world understand these things? That is no wonder: it was observed long ago, "An unwise man doth not consider this, and a fool doth not understand it."

23. But I have not done with this same general providence yet. By the grace of God, I will sift it to the bottom: and I hope to show it is such stark staring nonsense, as every man of sense ought to be utterly ashamed of.

You say, "You allow a *general* providence, but deny a *particular* one." And what is a general, of whatever kind it be, that includes no particulars? Is not every general necessarily made up of its several particulars? Can you instance in any general that is not? Tell me any genus, if you can, that contains no species? What is it that constitutes a genus, but so many species added together? What, I pray, is a whole that contains no parts? Mere nonsense and contradiction!—Every whole must, in the nature of things, be made up of its several parts; insomuch that if there be no parts, there can be no whole.

24. As this is a point of the utmost importance, we may consider it a little farther. What do you mean by a general providence, contradistinguished from a particular? Do you mean a providence which superintends only the larger parts of the universe? Suppose the sun, moon, and stars. Does it not regard the earth too? You allow it does. But does it not likewise regard the inhabitants of it? Else what doth the earth, an inanimate lump of matter, signify? Is not one spirit, one heir of immortality, of more value than all the earth? Yea, though you add it to the sun, moon, and stars? Nay, and the whole inanimate creation? Might we not say, "These shall perish; but" this "remaineth: these all shall wax old as doth a garment;" but this (it may be said in a lower sense, even of the creature) is "the same," and his "years shall not fail."

25. Or do you mean, when you assert a general providence, distinct from a particular one, that God regards only some parts of the world, and does not regard others? What parts of it does he regard? Those without, or those within, the solar system? Or does he regard some parts of the earth, and not others? Which parts? Only those within the temperate zones? What parts then are under the care of his providence? Where will you lay the line? Do you exclude from it those that live in the torrid zone? Or those that dwell within the arctic circles? Nay, rather say, "The Lord is loving to every man," and his care "is over all his works."

26. Do you mean, (for we would fain find out your meaning, if you have any meaning at all,) that the providence of God does, indeed,

extend to all parts of the earth, with regard to great and singular events; such as the rise and fall of empires; but that the little concerns of this or that man are beneath the notice of the Almighty? Then you do not consider, that *great* and *little* are merely relative terms, which have place only with respect to men. With regard to the Most High, man, and all the concerns of men, are nothing, less than nothing, before him. And nothing is small in his sight, that, in any degree, affects the welfare of any that fear God and work righteousness. What becomes then of your general providence, exclusive of a particular? Let it be for ever rejected by all rational men, as absurd, self contradictory nonsense. We may then sum up the whole Scriptural doctrine of providence, in that fine saying of St. Austin, "*Ita præsidet singulis sicut universis, et universis sicut singulis!*"

"Father, how wide thy glories shine!
Lord of the universe,—and mine:
Thy goodness watches o'er the whole,
As all the world were but one soul:
Yet keeps my every sacred hair,
As I remain'd thy single care."

27. We may learn from this short view of the providence of God, first, to put our whole trust in him, who hath never failed them that seek him. Our blessed Lord himself makes this very use of the great truth now before us. "Fear not, therefore:" if you truly fear God, you need fear none besides. He will be a strong tower to all that trust in him, from the face of your enemies. What is there either in heaven or in earth that can harm you, while you are under the care of the Creator and Governor of heaven and earth? Let all earth and all hell combine against you; yea, the whole animate and inanimate creation; they cannot harm, while God is on your side: his favourable kindness covers you as a shield.

28. Nearly allied to this confidence in God, is the thankfulness we owe for his kind protection. Let those give thanks, whom the Lord thus delivers from the hand of all their enemies. What an unspeakable blessing it is, to be the peculiar care of Him that has all power in heaven and earth! How can we sufficiently praise him, while we are under his wings, and his faithfulness and truth are our shield and buckler?

29. But meantime we should take the utmost care to walk humbly and closely with our God. Walk *humbly:* for if you in any wise rob God of his honour, if you ascribe any thing to yourself, the things which should have been for your wealth, will prove to you an "occasion of falling." And walk *closely:* see that you have a conscience void of offence, towards God and towards man. It is, so long as you do this, that you are the peculiar care of your Father which is in heaven. But let not the consciousness of his caring for you, make you careless, indolent, or slothful: on the contrary, while you are penetrated with that deep truth, "The help that is done upon earth, He doeth it himself;" be as earnest and diligent in the use of all the means, as if you were your own protector.

Lastly: In what a melancholy condition are those, who do not believe there is any providence; or, which comes to exactly the same point, not a particular one! Whatever station they are in, as long as they are in the world, they are exposed to numberless dangers, which no human wisdom can foresee, and no human power can resist. And there is no

help! If they trust in men, they find them "deceitful upon the weights.' In many cases they cannot help: in others, they will not. But were they ever so willing, they will die: therefore, vain is the help of man. And God is far above, out of their sight: they expect no help from him. These modern (as well as the ancient) Epicureans have learned, that the

"Universal Cause
Acts not by partial, but by general laws."

He only takes care of the great globe itself; not of its puny inhabitants. He heeds not how those

"Vagrant emmets crawl
At random on the air-suspended ball."

How uncomfortable is the situation of that man who has no farther hope than this! But, on the other hand, how unspeakably *happy* is the man that hath the Lord for his help, and whose "hope is in the Lord his God;" who can say, "I have set the Lord always before me; because he is on my right hand, I shall not be moved!"—therefore, "though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

SERMON LXXIII.—*The Wisdom of God's Counsels.*

"Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God," Rom. xi, 33.

1. SOME apprehend the wisdom and the knowledge of God to mean one and the same thing. Others believe, that the wisdom of God more directly refers to his appointing the ends of all things, and his knowledge, to the means which he hath prepared and made conducive to those ends. The former seems to be the most natural explication; as the wisdom of God, in its most extensive meaning, must include the one as well as the other; the means as well as the ends.

2. Now the wisdom, as well as the power of God, is abundantly manifested in his creation; in the formation and arrangement of all his works, in heaven above and in the earth beneath; and in adapting them all to the several ends for which they were designed: insomuch that each of them, apart from the rest, is good; but altogether are *very good:* all conspiring together, in one connected system, to the glory of God, in the happiness of his intelligent creatures.

3. As this wisdom appears even to short-sighted men, (and much more to spirits of a higher order,) in the creation and disposition of the whole universe, and every part of it; so it equally appears in their preservation, in his "upholding all things by the word of his power." And it no less eminently appears in the permanent government of all that he has created. How admirably does his wisdom direct the motions of the heavenly bodies! Of all the stars in the firmament whether those that are fixed, or those that wander, though never out of their several orbits! Of the sun in the midst of heaven! Of those amazing bodies, the comets, that shoot in every direction through the immeasurable fields of ether! How does he superintend all the parts of this lower world, this "speck of creation," the earth! So that all things are still as they were at the beginning, "beautiful in their seasons;" and summer and

winter, seed time and harvest, regularly follow each other. Yea, all things serve their Creator: "fire and hail, snow and vapour, wind and storm, are fulfilling his word:" so that we may well say, "Oh Lord our Governor, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!"

4. Equally conspicuous is the wisdom of God in the government of nations, of states, and kingdoms; yea, rather more conspicuous; if infinite can be allowed to admit of any degrees. For the whole inanimate creation, being totally passive and inert, can make no opposition to his will. Therefore, in the natural world, all things roll on in an even uninterrupted course. But it is far otherwise in the moral world. Here evil men and evil spirits continually oppose the divine will, and create numberless irregularities. Here, therefore, is full scope for the exercise of all the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, in counteracting all the wickedness and folly of men, and all the subtlety of Satan, to carry on his own glorious design; the salvation of lost mankind. Indeed were he to do this by an absolute decree, and by his own irresistible power, it would imply no wisdom at all. But his wisdom is shown, by saving man in such a manner as not to destroy his nature, nor to take away the liberty which he has given him.

5. But the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God, are most eminently displayed in his church: in planting it like a grain of mustard seed, the least of all seeds; in preserving and continually increasing it, till it grew into a great tree, notwithstanding the uninterrupted opposition of all the powers of darkness. This the apostle justly terms *the manifold wisdom* (πολυποικιλος σοφια) *of God.* It is an uncommonly expressive word, intimating that this wisdom, in the manner of its operation, is diversified a thousand ways, and exerts itself with infinite varieties. These things the highest "angels desire to look into," but can never fully comprehend. It seems to be with regard to these chiefly, that the apostle utters that strong exclamation, "How unsearchable are his judgments!" His counsels, designs, impossible to be fathomed; "and his ways" of accomplishing them, "past finding out!" Impossible to be traced. According to the psalmist, "His paths are in the deep waters, and his footsteps are not known."

6. But a little of this he has been pleased to reveal unto us: and by keeping closely to what he has revealed; meantime comparing the word and the work of God together; we may understand a part of his ways. We may, in some measure, trace this manifold wisdom from the beginning of the world; from Adam to Noah, from Noah to Moses, and from Moses to Christ. But I would now consider it (after just touching on the history of the church in past ages) only with regard to what he has wrought in the present age; during the last half century; yea, and in this little corner of the world, the British islands only.

7. In the fulness of time, just when it seemed best to his infinite wisdom, God brought his first-begotten into the world. He then laid the foundation of his church; though it hardly appeared till the day of pentecost. And it was then a glorious church; all the members thereof being "filled with the Holy Ghost;" being "of one heart and of one mind, and continuing steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and in fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers." In *fellowship;* that is, having all things in common; no man counting any thing he had his own.

"Meek simple followers of the Lamb,
They lived, and thought, and spake the same:
They all were of one heart and soul,
And only love inspired the whole."

8. But this happy state did not continue long. See Ananias and Sapphira, through the love of money, ("the root of all evil,") making the first breach in the community of goods! See the partiality, the unjust respect of persons on the one side, the resentment and murmuring on the other, even while the apostles themselves presided over the church at Jerusalem! See the grievous spots and wrinkles that were found in every part of the church, recorded not only in the Acts, but in the epistles of St. Paul, James, Peter, and John. A still fuller account we have in the Revelation: and, according to this, in what a condition was the Christian church, even in the first century, even before St. John was removed from the earth; if we may judge (as undoubtedly we may) of the state of the church in general, from the state of those particular churches, (all but those of Smyrna and Philadelphia,) to which our Lord directed his epistles! And from this time, for fourteen hundred years, it was corrupted more and more, as all history shows, till scarce any, either of the power or form of religion was left.

9. Nevertheless it is certain, that the gates of hell did never totally prevail against it. God always reserved a seed for himself; a few that worshipped him in spirit and in truth. I have often doubted, whether these were not the very persons whom the rich and honourable Christians, who will always have number as well as power on their side, did not stigmatize, from time to time, with the title of heretics. Perhaps it was chiefly by this artifice of the devil and his children, that the good which was in them being evil spoken of, they were prevented from being so extensively useful as otherwise they might have been. Nay, I have doubted whether that arch heretic, Montanus, was not one of the holiest men in the second century. Yea, I would not affirm, that the arch heretic of the fifth century, (as plentifully as he has been bespattered for many ages,) was not one of the holiest men of that age, not excepting St. Augustine himself: (a wonderful saint! as full of pride, passion, bitterness, censoriousness, and as foul-mouthed to all that contradicted him, as George Fox himself.) I verily believe, the real heresy of Pelagius, was neither more nor less than this: The holding that Christians may, by the grace of God, (not without it; that I take to be a mere slander,) "go on to perfection;" or, in other words, "fulfil the law of Christ."

"But St. Augustine says:"—When Augustine's passions were heated, his word is not worth a rush. And here is the secret: St. Augustine was angry at Pelagius: hence he slandered and abused him, (as his manner was,) without either fear or shame. And St. Augustine was then in the Christian world, what Aristotle was afterwards: there needed no other proof of any assertion, than "*Ipse dixit*:" "St. Augustine *said it*."

10. But to return: when iniquity had overspread the church as a flood, the Spirit of the Lord lifted up a standard against it. He raised up a poor monk, without wealth, without power, and, at that time, without friends, to declare war, as it were, against all the world; against the bishop of Rome and all his adherents. But this little stone being chosen of God, soon grew into a great mountain and increased more

and more, till it had covered a considerable part of Europe. Yet even before Luther was called home, the love of many was waxed cold. Many, that had once run well, turned back from the holy commandment delivered to them; yea, the greater part of those that once experienced the power of faith, made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. The observing this was supposed to be the occasion of that illness (a fit of the stone) whereof Luther died; after uttering these melancholy words; "I have spent my strength for nought! Those who are called by my name, are, it is true, reformed in opinions and modes of worship; but in their hearts and lives, in their tempers and practice, they are not a jot better than the Papists!"

11. About the same time it pleased God to visit Great Britain. A few in the reign of king Henry the eighth, and many more in the three following reigns, were real witnesses of true, scriptural Christianity. The number of these exceedingly increased, in the beginning of the following century. And in the year 1627, there was a wonderful pouring out of the Spirit in several parts of England, as well as in Scotland, and the north of Ireland. But from the time that riches and honour poured in upon them that feared and loved God, their hearts began to be estranged from him, and to cleave to the present world. No sooner was persecution ceased, and the poor, despised, persecuted Christians, invested with power, and placed in ease and affluence, but a change of circumstances brought a change of spirit. Riches and honour soon produced their usual effects. Having the world, they quickly loved the world: they no longer breathed after heaven; but became more and more attached to the things of earth. So that in a few years, one who knew and loved them well, and was an unexceptionable judge of men and manners, (Dr. Owen,) deeply lamented over them, as having lost all the life and power of religion, and being become just of the same spirit with those, whom they despised as the mire in the streets.

12. What little religion was left in the land, received another deadly wound at the restoration, by one of the worst princes that ever sat on the English throne; and by the most abandoned court in Europe. And infidelity now broke in amain, and overspread the land as a flood. Of course, all kind of immorality came with it, and increased to the end of the century. Some feeble attempts were made to stem the torrent during the reign of queen Anne; but it still increased till about the year 1725, when Mr. Law published his "Practical Treatise on Christian Perfection;" and not long after, his "Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life." Here the seed was sown, which soon grew up, and spread to Oxford, London, Bristol, Leeds, York; and, within a few years, to the greatest part of England, Scotland, and Ireland.

13. But what means did the wisdom of God make use of in effecting this great work? He thrust out such labourers into his harvest, as the wisdom of man would never have thought on. He chose the weak things to confound the strong, and the foolish things to confound the wise. He chose a few young, poor, ignorant men, without experience, learning, or art; but simple of heart, devoted to God, full of faith and zeal, seeking no honour, no profit, no pleasure, no ease, but merely to save souls; fearing neither want, pain, persecution, nor whatever man could do unto them; yea, not counting their lives dear unto themselves, so they might finish their course with joy. Of the same spirit were the

people whom God by their word called out of darkness into his marvellous light, many of whom soon agreed to join together, in order to strengthen each other's hands in God. These also were simple of heart, devoted to God, zealous of good works; desiring neither honour, nor riches, nor pleasure, nor ease, nor any thing under the sun; but to attain the whole image of God, and to dwell with him in glory.

14. But as these young preachers grew in years, they did not all grow in grace. Several of them indeed increased in other knowledge; but not proportionably in the knowledge of God. They grew less simple, less alive to God, and less devoted to him. They were less zealous for God; and, consequently, less active; less diligent in his service. Some of them began to desire the praise of men, and not the praise of God only; some to be weary of a wandering life, and so to seek ease and quietness. Some began again to fear the faces of men; to be ashamed of their calling; to be unwilling to deny themselves, to take up their cross daily, "and endure hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ." Wherever these preachers laboured, there was not much fruit of their labours. Their word was not, as formerly, clothed with power: it carried with it no demonstration of the Spirit. The same faintness of spirit was in their private conversation. They were no longer "instant in season, out of season;" "warning every man, and exhorting every man," "if by any means they might save some."

15. But as some preachers declined from their first love, so did many of the people. They were likewise assaulted on every side; encompassed with manifold temptations: and while many of them triumphed over all, and were "more than conquerors through him that loved them;" others gave place to the world, the flesh, or the devil; and so "entered into temptation:" some of them "made shipwreck of their faith," at once; some by slow, insensible degrees. Not a few, being in want of the necessaries of life, were overwhelmed with the cares of the world; many relapsed into the desires of other things, which choked the good seed, "and it became unfruitful."

16. But of all temptations, none so struck at the whole work of God, as "the deceitfulness of riches:" a thousand melancholy proofs of which I have seen within these last fifty years. Deceitful are they indeed! For who will believe they do him the least harm? And yet I have not known three score rich persons, perhaps not half the number, during three score years, who, as far as I can judge, were not less holy than they would have been had they been poor. By riches I mean, not thousands of pounds; but any more than will procure the conveniences of life. Thus I account him a rich man, who has food and raiment for himself and family, without running into debt, and something over. And how few are there in these circumstances who are not hurt, if not destroyed thereby! Yet who takes warning? Who seriously regards that awful declaration of the apostle; even "They that desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into divers foolish and hurtful desires, which plunge men into destruction and perdition?" How many sad instances have we seen of this in London, in Bristol, in Newcastle; in all the large trading towns throughout the kingdom, where God has lately caused his power to be known! See how many of those who were once simple of heart, desiring nothing but God, are now gratifying "the desire of the flesh;" studying to please their senses, particularly their

taste; endeavouring to enlarge the pleasure of tasting as far as possible. Are not *you* of that number? Indeed you are no drunkard, and no glutton; but do you not indulge yourself in a kind of regular sensuality? Are not eating and drinking the greatest pleasures of your life; the most considerable part of your happiness? If so, I fear St. Paul would have given you a place among those "whose god is their belly!" How many of them are now again indulging "the desire of the eye!" Using every means which is in their power, to enlarge the pleasures of their imagination! If not in grandeur, which as yet is out of their way; yet in new or beautiful things! Are not you seeking happiness in pretty or elegant apparel, or furniture? Or in new clothes, or books, or in pictures, or gardens? "Why, what harm is there in these things!" There is this harm, that they gratify "the desire of the eye," and thereby strengthen and increase it; making you more and more dead to God, and more alive to the world. How many are indulging "the pride of life!" Seeking the honour that cometh of men? Or "laying up treasures on earth?" They *gain all they can*, honestly and conscientiously. They *save all they can*, by cutting off all needless expense; by adding frugality to diligence. And so far all is right. This is the duty of every one that fears God. But they do not *give all they can;* without which they must needs grow more and more earthly minded. Their affections will cleave to the dust more and more; and they will have less and less communion with God. Is not this *your* case? Do you not seek the praise of men more than the praise of God? Do not *you* lay up, or at least desire and endeavour to "lay up, treasures on earth?" Are you not then (deal faithfully with your own soul!) more and more alive to the world; and, consequently, more and more dead to God? It cannot be otherwise. That *must* follow, unless you give all you can, as well as gain and save all you can. There is no other way under heaven to prevent your money from sinking you lower than the grave! For "if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." And if it *was* in him in ever so high a degree, yet if he slides into the love of the world, by the same degrees that this enters in, the love of God will go out of the heart.

17. And perhaps there is something more than all this contained in those words; "Love not the world, neither the things of the world." Here we are expressly warned against loving the *world*, as well as against loving "the things of the world." The *world*, is the men that know not God; that neither love nor fear him. To love these with a love of delight or complacence, to set our affections upon them, is here absolutely forbidden; and, by parity of reason, to converse or have any intercourse with them, farther than necessary business requires. Friendship or intimacy with them, St. James does not scruple to term adultery: "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not, that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend to the world, is an enemy of God." Do not endeavour to shuffle away, or evade the meaning of those strong words. They plainly require us to stand aloof from them; to have no needless commerce with unholy men. Otherwise we shall surely slide into conformity to the world; to their maxims, spirit, and customs. For not only their words, harmless as they seem, do eat as doth a canker; but their very breath is infectious;

their spirit imperceptibly influences our spirit. It steals "like water into our bowels, and like oil into our bones."

18. But all rich men are under a continual temptation to acquaintance and conversation with worldly men. They are likewise under a continual temptation to pride, to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think. They are strongly tempted to revenge, when they are ever so little affronted: and, having the means in their own hands, how few are there that resist the temptation! They are continually tempted to sloth, indolence, love of ease, softness, delicacy; to hatred of self denial, and taking up the cross, even that of fasting and rising early, without which it is impossible to grow in grace. If *you* are increased in goods, do not you know that these things are so? Do you contract no intimacy with worldly men? Do not you converse with them more than duty requires? Are you in no danger of pride? Of thinking yourself better than your poor, dirty neighbours? Do you never resent, yea, and revenge an affront? Do you never render evil for evil? Do not you give way to indolence or love of ease? Do you deny yourself, and take up your cross daily? Do you constantly rise as early as you did once? Why not? Is not your soul as precious now as it was then? How often do you fast? Is not this a duty to you, as much as to a day labourer? But if you are wanting in this, or any other respect, who will tell you of it? Who dares tell you the plain truth, but those who neither hope nor fear any thing from you? And if any venture to deal plainly with you, how hard is it for you to bear *it*! Are not you far less reprovable, far less advisable, than when you were poor? It is well if you can bear reproof even from *me*: and in a few days you will see me no more.

Once more, therefore, I say, having gained and saved all you can do you give all you can? else your money will eat your flesh as fire, and will sink you to the nethermost hell! Oh beware of "laying up treasures upon earth!" Is it not treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath?

Lord, I have warned them! but if they will not be warned, what can I do more? I can only "give them up unto their own hearts' lusts, and let them follow their own imaginations!"

19. By not taking this warning, it is certain many of the Methodists are already fallen; many are falling at this very time; and there is great reason to apprehend, that many more will fa most of whom will rise no more!

But what method may it be hoped the all wise God will take to repair the decay of his work? If he does not remove the candlestick from this people, and raise up another people, who will be more faithful to his grace, it is probable he will proceed in the same manner as he has done in time past. And this has hitherto been his method: when any of the old preachers left their first love; lost their simplicity and zeal, and departed from their work; he raised up young men, who *are* what they *were*, and sent them into the harvest in their place. The same he has done, when he was pleased to remove any of his faithful labourers into Abraham's bosom. So when Henry Millard, Edward Dunstone, John Manners, Thomas Walsh, or others, rested from their labours, he raised up other young men, from time to time, willing and able to perform the same service. It is highly probable, he will take the very same method for the time to come. The place of those preach

ers, who either die in the Lord, or lose the spiritual life which God had given them, he will supply by others that are alive to God, and desire only to spend and be spent for him.

20. Hear ye this, all ye preachers, who have not the same life, the same communion with God, the same zeal for his cause, the same burning love to souls, that you had once! "Take heed unto yourselves, that ye lose not the things ye have wrought, but that ye receive a full reward." Beware lest God swear in his wrath, that ye shall bear his standard no more! Lest he be provoked to take the word of his grace utterly out of your mouth! Be assured, the Lord hath no need of *you; his* work doth not depend upon *your* help. As he is able, "out of stones, to raise up children to Abraham;" so he is able, out of the same, to raise up preachers after his own heart! Oh make haste! Remember from whence you are fallen; and repent and do the first works!

21. Would it not provoke the Lord of the harvest to lay you altogether aside, if you *despised* the labourers he had raised up, merely because of their *youth?* This was commonly done to us, when *we* were first sent out, between forty and fifty years ago. Old, wise men asked, "What will these *young* heads do?" So the then bishop of London in particular. But shall we adopt their language? God forbid! Shall we teach him, whom he shall send; whom he shall employ in his own work? Are we then the men, and shall wisdom die with us? Does the work of God hang upon us? Oh humble yourselves before God, lest he pluck you away and there be none to deliver!

22. Let us next consider what method has the wisdom of God taken, for these five and forty years, when thousands of the people, that once ran well, one after another, "drew back to perdition?" Why, as fast as any of the poor were overwhelmed with worldly care, so that the seed they had received became unfruitful; and as fast as any of the rich drew back unto perdition, by giving way to the love of the world, to foolish and hurtful desires, or to any other of those innumerable temptations, which are inseparable from riches; God has constantly, from time to time, raised up men, endued with the spirit which they had lost: yea, and generally this change has been made with considerable advantage: for the last were, not only (for the most part) more numerous than the first, but more watchful, profiting by their example; more spiritual, more heavenly minded, more zealous, more alive to God, and more dead to all things here below.

23. And, blessed be God, we see he is now doing the same thing in various parts of the kingdom. In the room of those that have fallen from their steadfastness, or are falling at this day, he is continually raising up, out of the stones, other children to Abraham. This he does at one or another place, according to his own will; pouring out his quickening Spirit on this or another people, just as it pleaseth him. He is raising up those of every age and degree, young men and maidens, old men and children, to be "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; to show forth his praise, who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light." And we have no reason to doubt, but he will continue so to do, till the great promise is fulfilled; till "the earth is filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea; till all Israel is saved, and the fulness of the Gentiles is come in."

24. But have all that have sunk under manifold temptations, so fallen that they can rise no more? Hath the Lord cast them all off for ever, and will he be no more entreated? Is his promise come utterly to an end for evermore? God forbid that we should affirm this! Surely he is able to heal all their backslidings: for with God no word is impossible. And is he not willing too? He is "God, and not man; therefore his compassions fail not." Let no backslider despair. "Return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon you; unto our God, and he will abundantly pardon."

Meantime, thus saith the Lord to you that now supply their place. "Be not high minded, but fear!" If "the Lord spared not" thy elder brethren, "take heed lest he spare not thee!" Fear, though not with a servile, tormenting fear, lest thou fall by any of the same temptations; by either the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, or the desire of other things. Tempted you will be in ten thousand different ways, perhaps as long as you remain in the body; but as long as you continue to watch and pray, you will not "enter into temptations." His grace has been hitherto sufficient for you; and so it will be unto the end.

25. You see here, brethren, a short and general sketch of the manner wherein God works upon earth, in repairing this work of grace, wherever it is decayed through the subtlety of Satan, and the unfaithfulness of men, giving way to the fraud and malice of the devil. Thus he is now carrying on his own work, and thus he will do to the end of time. And how wonderfully plain and simple is his way of working, in the spiritual, as well as the natural world! That is, his general plan of working, of repairing whatsoever is decayed. But as to innumerable particulars, we must still cry out, "Oh the depth! How unfathomable are his counsels, and his paths past tracing out!"

Sermon LXXIV.—*The Imperfection of Human Knowledge*

"We know in part," 1 Cor. xiii, 9.

1. The desire of knowledge is a universal principle in man, fixed in his inmost nature. It is not variable, but constant in every rational creature, unless while it is suspended by some stronger desire. And it is insatiable: "the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing;" neither the mind with any degree of knowledge which can be conveyed into it. And it is planted in every human soul for excellent purposes. It is intended to hinder our taking up our rest in any thing here below; to raise our thoughts to higher and higher objects, more and more worthy our consideration, till we ascend to the source of all knowledge, and all excellence, the all wise, and all gracious Creator.

2. But although our desire of knowledge has no bounds, yet our knowledge itself has. It is, indeed, confined within very narrow bounds; abundantly narrower than common people imagine, or men of learning are willing to acknowledge: a strong intimation, (since the great Creator doeth nothing in vain,) that there will be some future state of being, wherein that now insatiable desire will be satisfied, and there will be no longer so immense a distance between the appetite and the object of it.

3. The present knowledge of man is exactly adapted to his present wants. It is sufficient to warn us of, and to preserve us from, most of the evils to which we are now exposed; and to procure us whatever is necessary for us in this our infant state of existence. We know enough of the nature and sensible qualities of the things that are round about us, so far as they are subservient to the health and strength of our bodies; we know how to procure and prepare our food; we know what raiment is fit to cover us; we know how to build our houses, and to furnish them with all necessaries and conveniences; we know just as much as is conducive to our living comfortably in this world: but of innumerable things above, below, and round about us, we know little more than that they exist. And in this our deep ignorance is seen the goodness, as well as the wisdom of God, in cutting short his knowledge on every side, on purpose to "hide pride from man."

4. Therefore it is, that by the very constitution of their nature, the wisest of men "know [but] in part." And how amazingly small a part do they know, either of the Creator, or of his works! This is a very needful, but a very unpleasing theme; for "vain man would be wise." Let us reflect upon it for awhile. And may the God of wisdom and love open our eyes to discern our own ignorance!

I. 1. To begin with the great Creator himself. How astonishingly little do we know of God!—How small a part of his nature do we know! Of his essential attributes. What conception can we form of his omnipresence? Who is able to comprehend, how God is in this and every place? How he fills the immensity of space? If philosophers, by denying the existence of a vacuum, only meant that there is no place empty of God; that every point of infinite space is full of God; certainly no man could call it in question. But still, the fact being admitted, what is omnipresence or ubiquity? Man is no more able to comprehend this, than to grasp the universe.

2. The omnipresence or immensity of God, sir Isaac Newton endeavours to illustrate by a strong expression, by terming infinite space, "the sensorium of the Deity." And the very heathens did not scruple to say, "All things are full of God:" just equivalent with his own declaration;—"Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?" How beautifully does the Psalmist illustrate this! "Whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I go up into heaven, thou art there: if I go down to hell, thou art there also. If I take the wings of the morning, and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there thy hand shall find me, and thy right hand shall hold me." But, in the mean time, what conception can we form, either of his eternity or immensity? Such knowledge is too wonderful for us: we cannot attain unto it.

3. A second essential attribute of God is eternity. He existed before all time. Perhaps we might more properly say, he *does exist* from everlasting to everlasting. But what is eternity? A celebrated author says, that the divine eternity is, "*Vitæ interminabilis tota simul et perfecta possessio:*" The at once entire and perfect possession of never ending life. But how much wiser are we for this definition? We know just as much of it as we did before. "The at once entire and perfect possession?" Who can conceive what this means?

4. If indeed God had stamped (as some have maintained) an idea of himself on every human soul, we must certainly have understood

something of these, as well as his other attributes; for we cannot suppose he would have impressed upon us either a false or an imperfect idea of himself; but the truth is, no man ever did, or does now, find any such idea stamped upon his soul. The little which we do know of God (except what we receive by the inspiration of the Holy One,) we do not gather from any inward impression; but gradually acquire from without. "The invisible things of God," if they are known at all, "are known from the things that are made;" not from what God hath written in our hearts, but from what he hath written in all his works.

5. Hence then, from his works, particularly his works of creation, we are to learn the knowledge of God. But it is not easy to conceive how little we know even of these. To begin with those that are at a distance: who knows how far the universe extends? What are the limits of it? The morning stars can tell, who sang together, when the lines of it were stretched out; when God said, "This be thy just circumference, oh world!" But all beyond the fixed stars is utterly hid from the children of men. And what do we know of the fixed stars? Who telleth the number of them? Even that small portion of them, that by their mingled light form, what we call, "the milky way?" And who knows the use of them? Are they so many suns that illuminate their respective planets? Or do they only minister to this, (as Mr. Hutchinson supposes,) and contribute in some unknown way, to the perpetual circulation of light and spirit? Who knows what comets are? Are they planets not fully formed? Or planets destroyed by conflagration? Or are they bodies of a wholly different nature, of which we can form no idea? Who can tell what is the sun? Its use we know; but who knows of what substance it is composed? Nay, we are not yet able to determine, whether it be fluid or solid! Who knows what is the precise distance of the sun from the earth? Many astronomers are persuaded it is a hundred millions of miles; others, that it is only eighty six millions, though generally accounted ninety. But equally great men say, it is no more than fifty; some of them, that it is but twelve: last comes Dr. Rogers, and demonstrates that it is just two millions, nine hundred thousand miles! So little do we know even of this glorious luminary, the eye and soul of the lower world! And just as much of the planets that surround him; yea, of our own planet, the moon. Some indeed have discovered

"Rivers and mountains on her spotty globe;"

yea, have marked out all her seas and continents! but after all, we know just nothing of the matter. We have nothing but mere uncertain conjecture, concerning the nearest of all the heavenly bodies.

6. But let us come to the things that are still nearer home, and inquire what knowledge we have of them. How much do we know of that wonderful body, light? How is it communicated to us? Does it flow in a continued stream from the sun? Or does the sun impel the particles next his orb, and so on and on, to the extremity of his system? Again: does light gravitate or not? Does it attract or repel other bodies? Is it subject to the general laws, which obtain in all other matter? Or is it a body *sui generis*, altogether different from all other matter? Is it the same with electric fluid, or not? Who can explain the phenomena of electricity? Who knows why some bodies conduct the electric fluid, and others arrest its course? Why is the phial capable of being charged

to such a point, and no farther? A thousand more questions might be asked on this head, which no man living can answer.

7. But surely we understand the air we breathe, and which encompasses us on every side. By that admirable property of elasticity, it is the general spring of nature. But is elasticity essential to air, and inseparable from it? Nay, it has been lately proved, by numberless experiments, that air may be fixed, that is, divested of its elasticity, and generated, or restored to it again. Therefore it is no otherwise elastic, than as it is connected with electric fire. And is not this electric or ethereal fire, the only true essential elastic in nature? Who knows by what power dew, rain, and other vapours, rise and fall in the air? Can we account for the phenomenon of them upon the common principles? Or must we own, with a late ingenious author, that those principles are utterly insufficient, and that they cannot be rationally accounted for, but upon the principle of electricity?

8. Let us now descend to the earth which we tread upon, and which God has peculiarly given to the children of men. Do the children of men understand this? Suppose the terraqueous globe to be seven or eight thousand miles in diameter, how much of this do we know? Perhaps a mile or two of its surface: so far the art of man has penetrated. But who can inform us, what lies beneath the region of stones, metals, minerals, and other fossils? This is only a thin crust, which bears an exceeding small proportion to the whole. Who can acquaint us with the inner parts of the globe? Whereof do these consist? Is there a central fire, a grand reservoir, which not only supplies the burning mountains, but also ministers (though we know not how) to the ripening of gems and metals; yea, and perhaps to the production of vegetables, and the well being of animals too? Or is the great deep still contained in the bowels of the earth? A central abyss of waters? Who hath seen? Who can tell? Who can give any solid satisfaction to a rational inquirer?

9. How much of the very surface of the globe is still utterly unknown to us! How very little do we know of the polar regions, either north or south, either in Europe or Asia! How little of those vast countries, the inland parts either of Africa or America! Much less do we know what is contained in the broad sea, the great abyss, which covers so large a part of the globe. Most of its chambers are inaccessible to man, so that we cannot tell how they are furnished. How little do we know of those things on the dry land, which fall directly under our notice! Consider even the most simple metals or stones: how imperfectly are we acquainted with their nature and properties! Who knows what it is that distinguishes metals from all other fossils? It is answered, "Why, they are heavier." Very true: but what is the cause of their being heavier? What is the specific difference between metals and stones? Or between one metal and another? Between gold and silver? Between tin and lead? It is all mystery to the sons of men.

10. Proceed we to the vegetable kingdom. Who can demonstrate that the sap, in any vegetable, performs a regular circulation through its vessels, or that it does not? Who can point out the specific difference between one kind of plant and another? Or the peculiar, internal conformation and disposition of their component parts? Yea, what man living, thoroughly understands the nature and properties of any one plant under heaven?

11. With regard to animals: are microscopic animals, so called, *real* animals or no? If they are, are they not essentially different from all other animals in the universe, as not requiring any food, not generating or being generated? Are they no animals at all, but merely inanimate particles of matter, in a state of fermentation? How totally ignorant are the most sagacious of men touching the whole affair of generation! Even the generation of men. In the book of the Creator, indeed, were all our members written, "which day by day were fashioned, when as yet there were none of them." But by what rule were they fashioned? In what manner? By what means was the first motion communicated to the *punctum saliens?* When, and how, was the immortal spirit superadded to the senseless clay? It is mystery all: and we can only say, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made."

12. With regard to insects, many are the discoveries which have been lately made. But how little is all that is discovered yet, in comparison of what is undiscovered? How many millions of them, by their extreme minuteness, totally escape all our inquiries? And, indeed, the minute parts of the largest animals, elude our utmost diligence. Have we a more complete knowledge of fishes than we have of insects? A great part, if not the greatest part, of the inhabitants of the waters, are totally concealed from us. It is probable, the species of sea animals are full as numerous as the land animals. But how few of them are known to us! And it is very little we know of those few. With birds we are a little better acquainted: and, indeed, it is but a little. For of very many we know hardly any thing more than their outward shape. We know a few of the obvious properties of others, chiefly those that frequent our houses. But we have not a thorough, adequate knowledge even of them. How little do we know of beasts! We do not know whence the different tempers and qualities arise, not only in different species of them, but in individuals of the same species; yea, and frequently in those which spring from the same parents, the same both male and female animal. Are they mere machines? Then they are incapable of pleasure or pain. Nay, they can have no senses; they neither see nor hear; they neither taste nor smell. Much less can they know, or remember, or move, any otherwise than they are impelled from without. But all this, as daily experiments show, is quite contrary to matter of fact.

13. Well; but if we know nothing else, do not we know ourselves? Our bodies and our souls? What is our soul? It is a spirit, we know. But what is a spirit? Here we are at a full stop. And where is the soul lodged? In the pineal gland? In the whole brain? In the heart? In the blood? In any single part of the body? Or, (if any one can understand those terms,) "all in all, and all in every part?" How is the soul united to the body? A spirit to a clod? What is the secret, imperceptible chain that couples them together? Can the wisest of men give a satisfactory answer to any one of these plain questions?

And as to our body itself, how little do we know! During a night's sleep, a healthy man respires one part in four less when he sweats, than when he does not. Who can account for this? What is flesh? That of the muscles in particular? Are the fibres that compose it of a determinate size? So that they can be divided only so far? Or are they resolvable *in infinitum?* How does a muscle act? By being inflated,

and consequently shortened? But what is it inflated with? If with blood, how and whence comes that blood? And whither does it go, the moment the muscle is relaxed? Are the nerves pervious or solid? How do they act? By vibration or transmission of the animal spirits? Who knows what the animal spirits are? Are they electric fire? What is sleep? Wherein does it consist? What is dreaming? How can we know dreams from waking thoughts? I doubt no man knows. Oh how little do we know, even concerning ourselves! What then can we expect to know, concerning the whole creation of God?

II. 1. But are we not better acquainted with his works of providence, than with his works of creation? It is one of the first principles of religion, that his kingdom ruleth over all: so that we may say with confidence, "Oh Lord our Governor, how excellent is thy name over all the earth!" It is a childish conceit, to suppose chance governs the world, or has any part in the government of it: no, not even in those things that, to a vulgar eye, appear to be perfectly casual. "The lot is cast into the lap; but the disposal thereof is from the Lord." Our blessed Master himself has put this matter beyond all possible doubt: Not a sparrow, saith he, falleth to the ground without the will of your Father which is in heaven: yea, (to express the thing more strongly still,) "Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered."

2. But although we are well apprized of this general truth, that all things are governed by the providence of God; (the very language of the heathen orator, "*Deorum moderamine cuncta geri;*") yet how amazingly little do we know of the particulars contained under this general! How little do we understand of his providential dealings, either with regard to nations, or families, or individuals? There are heights and depths in all these, which our understanding can in no wise fathom. We can comprehend but a small part of his ways now; the rest we shall know hereafter.

3. Even with regard to entire nations, how little do we comprehend of God's providential dealings with them! What innumerable nations in the eastern world once flourished, to the terror of all around them, and are now swept away from the face of the earth; and their memorial is perished with them! Nor has the case been otherwise in the west. In Europe also we read of many large and powerful kingdoms, of which the names only are left: the people are vanished away, and are as though they had never been. But why it has pleased the Almighty Governor of the world, to sweep them away with the besom of destruction, we cannot tell: those who succeeded them being, many times, little better than themselves.

4. But it is not only with regard to ancient nations, that the providential dispensations of God are utterly incomprehensible to us: the same difficulties occur now. We cannot account for his present dealings with the inhabitants of the earth. We know, "the Lord is loving unto every man, and his mercy is over all his works." But we know not how to reconcile this with the present dispensations of his providence. At this day, is not almost every part of the earth full of darkness and cruel habitations? In what a condition, in particular, is the large and populous empire of Indostan! How many hundred thousands of the poor, quiet people, have been destroyed, and their carcasses left as the dung of the earth! In what a condition, (though they have no English

ruffians there,) are the numberless islands in the Pacific ocean! How little is their state above that of wolves and bears! And who careth either for their souls or their bodies? But does not the Father of men care for them? Oh mystery of providence!

5. And who cares for thousands, myriads, if not millions of wretched Africans? Are not whole droves of these poor sheep, (human, if not rational beings!) continually driven to market, and sold, like cattle, into the vilest bondage, without any hope of deliverance, but by death? Who cares for those outcasts of men, the well known Hottentots? It is true, a late writer has taken much pains to represent them as a respectable people. But from what motive, it is not easy to say; since he himself allows, (a specimen of their elegance of manners,) that the raw guts of sheep and other cattle are not only some of their choicest food, but also the ornaments of their arms and legs; and (a specimen of their religion) that the son is not counted a man, till he has beat his mother almost to death; and when his father grows old, he fastens him in a little hut, and leaves him there to starve! Oh Father of mercies! are these the works of thy own hands? The purchase of thy Son's blood?

6. How little better is either the civil or religious state of the poor American Indians! that is, the miserable remains of them: for in some provinces not one of them is left to breathe. In Hispaniola, when the Christians came thither first, there were three million of inhabitants. Scarce twelve thousand of them now survive. And in what condition are these, or the other Indians who are still scattered up and down in the vast continent of South or North America? Religion they have none: no public worship of any kind! God is not in all their thoughts. And most of them have no civil government at all; no laws, no magistrates; but every man does what is right in his own eyes: therefore, they are decreasing daily; and very probably, in a century or two there will not be one of them left.

7. However the inhabitants of Europe are not in so deplorable a condition. They are in a state of civilization; they have useful laws, and are governed by magistrates; they have religion; they are Christians. I am afraid, whether they are called Christians or not, many of them have not much religion. What say you to thousands of Laplanders, of Finlanders, of Samoiedes, and Greenlanders? Indeed, of all who live in high northern latitudes? Are they as civilized as sheep or oxen? To compare them with horses, or any of our domestic animals, would be doing them too much honour. Add to these, myriads of human savages, that are freezing among the snows of Siberia, and as many, if not more, who are wandering up and down in the deserts of Tartary. Add thousands upon thousands of Poles, and Muscovites; and of Christians, so called, from Turkey in Europe. And did "God so love" these, "that he gave his Son, his only begotten Son, to the end they might not perish, but have everlasting life!" Then why are they thus? Oh wonder above all wonders!

8. Is there not something equally mysterious in the divine dispensation, with regard to Christianity itself? Who can explain why Christianity is not spread as far as sin? Why is not the medicine sent to every place where the disease is found? But, alas! it is not: "the sound of it is" not now "gone forth into all lands." The poison is

diffused over the whole globe: the antidote is not known in a sixth part of it. Nay, and how is it that the wisdom and goodness of God suffer the antidote itself to be so grievously adulterated, not only in Roman Catholic countries, but almost in every part of the Christian world? So adulterated, by mixing it frequently with useless, frequently with poisonous ingredients, that it retains none, or at least a very small part, of its original virtue. Yea, it is so thoroughly adulterated by many of those very persons whom he has sent to administer it, that it adds tenfold malignity to the disease which it was designed to cure! In consequence of this, there is little more mercy or truth to be found among Christians than among pagans. Nay, it has been affirmed, and I am afraid truly, that many called Christians are far worse than the heathens that surround them; more profligate, more abandoned to all manner of wickedness; neither fearing God, nor regarding man! Oh who can comprehend this? Doth not He that is higher than the highest regard it?

9. Equally incomprehensible to us are many of the divine dispensations with regard to particular families. We cannot at all comprehend, why he raises some to wealth, honour, and power; and why, in the mean time, he depresses others with poverty and various afflictions. Some wonderfully prosper in all they take in hand, and the world pours in upon them; while others, with all their labour and toil, can scarce procure daily bread. And perhaps prosperity and applause continue with the former to their death; while the latter drink the cup of adversity to their life's end; although no reason appears to us, either for the prosperity of the one, or the adversity of the other.

10. As little can we account for the divine dispensations, with regard to individuals. We know not why the lot of this man is cast in Europe, the lot of that man in the wilds of America; why one is born of rich or noble, the other of poor parents; why the father and mother of one are strong and healthy; those of another weak and diseased: in consequence of which he drags a miserable being all the days of his life, exposed to want, and pain, and a thousand temptations, from which he finds no way to escape. How many are, from their very infancy, hedged in with such relations, that they seem to have no chance, (as some speak,) no possibility, of being useful to themselves or others? Why are they, antecedent to their own choice, entangled in such connections? Why are hurtful people so cast in their way that they know not how to escape them? And why are useful persons hid out of their sight, or snatched away from them at their utmost need? Oh God, how unsearchable are thy counsels! Too deep to be fathomed by our reason; and thy ways of executing those counsels not to be traced by our wisdom!

III. 1. Are we able to search out his works of grace, any more than his works of providence? Nothing is more sure, than that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Why is it then, that so vast a majority of mankind are, so far as we can judge, cut off from all means, all possibility of holiness, even from their mother's womb? For instance: What possibility is there that a Hottentot, a New-Zealander, or an inhabitant of Nova-Zembla, if he lives and dies there, should ever know what holiness means? or, consequently, ever attain it? Yea, but one may say, "He sinned before he was born, in a pre-existent state; therefore he was placed here in so unfavourable a situation; and it is mere mercy that he should have a second trial." I answer: Supposing such

a pre-existent state, this which you call a second trial, is really no trial at all. As soon as he is born into the world, he is absolutely in the power of his savage parents and relations, who, from the first dawn of reason, train him up in the same ignorance, atheism, and barbarity with themselves. He has no chance, so to speak, he has no possibility of any better education. What trial has he then? From the time he comes into the world, till he goes out of it again, he seems to be under a dire necessity of living in all ungodliness and unrighteousness. But how is this? How can this be the case with so many millions of the souls that God has made? Art thou not "the God of all the ends of the earth, and of them that remain in the broad sea?"

2. I desire it may be observed, that if this be improved into an objection against revelation, it is an objection that lies full as much against natural, as revealed religion. If it were conclusive, it would not drive us into deism, but into flat atheism. It would conclude, not only against the Christian revelation, but against the being of a God. And yet I see not how we can avoid the force of it, but by resolving all into the unsearchable wisdom of God; together with a deep conviction of our own ignorance, and inability to fathom his counsels.

3. Even among us, who are favoured far above these; to whom are entrusted the oracles of God, whose word is a lantern to our feet, and a light in all our paths; there are still many circumstances in his dispensations, which are above our comprehension. We know not why he suffered us so long to go on in our own ways, before we were convinced of sin. Or why he made use of this or the other instrument, and in this or the other manner: and a thousand circumstances attended the process of our conviction, which we do not comprehend. We know not why he suffered us to stay so long, before he revealed his Son in our hearts; or why this change from darkness to light was accompanied with such and such particular circumstances.

4. It is doubtless the peculiar prerogative of God, to reserve the "times and seasons in his own power." And we cannot give any reason, why of two persons equally athirst for salvation, one is presently taken into the favour of God, and the other left to mourn for months or years. One, as soon as he calls upon God, is answered, and filled with peace and joy in believing; another seeks after him, and, it seems, with the same degree of sincerity and earnestness, and yet cannot find him, or any consciousness of his favour, for weeks, or months, or years. We know well, this cannot possibly be owing to any absolute decree, consigning one, before he was born, to everlasting glory, and the other to everlasting fire; but we do not know, what is the reason for it: it is enough that God knoweth.

5. There is, likewise, great variety in the manner and time of God's bestowing his sanctifying grace; whereby he enables his children to give him their whole heart; which we can in no wise account for. We know not why he bestows this on some, even before they ask for it; (some unquestionable instances of which we have seen;) on some, after they had sought it but a few days: and yet permits other believers to wait for it, perhaps twenty, thirty, or forty years; nay, and others, till a few hours, or even minutes, before their spirits return to him. For the various circumstances also which attend the fulfilling of that great promise; "I will circumcise thy heart, to love the Lord thy God, with

all thy heart, and with all thy soul;" God undoubtedly has reasons; but those reasons are generally hid from the children of men. Once more: some of those who are enabled to love God with all their heart, and with all their soul, retain the same blessing, without any interruption, till they are carried to Abraham's bosom; others do not retain it, although they are not conscious of having grieved the Holy Spirit of God. This also we do not understand: we do not herein "know the mind of the Spirit."

IV. Several valuable lessons we may learn from a deep consciousness of this our own ignorance. First, we may learn hence, a lesson of humility; not "to think of ourselves," particularly with regard to our understanding, "more highly than we ought to think;" but "to think soberly:" being thoroughly convinced, that we are not sufficient of ourselves to think one good thought; that we should be liable to stumble at every step, to err every moment of our lives, were it not that we have "an anointing from the Holy One," which abideth "with us;" were it not that he who knoweth what is in man, helpeth our infirmities; that "there is a spirit in man" which giveth wisdom, "and the inspiration" of the Holy One which "giveth understanding."

From hence we may learn, secondly, a lesson of faith; of confidence in God. A full conviction of our own ignorance, may teach us a full trust in his wisdom. It may teach us, (what is not always so easy as one would conceive it to be,) to trust the invisible God, farther than we can see him. It may assist us in learning that difficult lesson, to "cast down" our own "imaginations;" (or *reasonings* rather, as the word properly signifies;) to "cast down every high thing, that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." There are, at present, two grand obstructions to our forming a right judgment of the dealings of God with respect to men. The one is, there are innumerable *facts* relating to every man, which we do not and cannot know. They are, at present, hid from us, and covered from our search by impenetrable darkness. The other is, we cannot see *the thoughts* of men, even when we know their actions. Still we know not their *intentions;* and without this, we can but ill judge of their outward actions. Conscious of this, "judge nothing before the time," concerning his providential dispensations; till he shall bring to light "the hidden things of darkness," and manifest "the thoughts and intents of the heart."

From a consciousness of our ignorance we may learn, thirdly, a lesson of resignation. We may be instructed to say, at all times, and in all instances, "Father, not as I will; but as thou wilt." This was the last lesson which our blessed Lord, as man, learned while he was upon earth. He could go no higher than, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt," till he bowed his head and gave up the ghost. Let us also herein be made conformable to his death, that we may know the full "power of his resurrection!"

Sermon LXXV.—*The Case of Reason Impartially Considered*

"Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men," 1 Cor. xiv, 20.

1. It is the true remark of an eminent man, who had made many observations on human nature; "If reason be against a man, a man will always be against reason." This has been confirmed by the experience of all ages. Very many have been the instances of it in the Christian, as well as the heathen world: yea, and that in the earliest times. Even then there were not wanting well meaning men, who, not having much reason themselves, imagined that reason was of no use in religion: yea, rather, that it was a hinderance to it. And there has not been wanting a succession of men, who have believed and asserted the same thing. But never was there a greater number of these in the Christian church, at least in Britain, than at this day.

2. Among them that despise and vilify reason, you may always expect to find those enthusiasts, who suppose the dreams of their own imagination to be revelations from God. We cannot expect that men of this turn will pay much regard to reason. Having an infallible guide, they are very little moved by the reasonings of fallible men. In the foremost of these we commonly find the whole herd of Antinomians; all that, however they may differ in other respects, agree in "making void the law through faith." If you oppose reason to these, when they are asserting propositions ever so full of absurdity and blasphemy, they will probably think it a sufficient answer to say, "Oh, this is your reason;" or, "your carnal reason:" so that all arguments are lost upon them: they regard them no more than stubble or rotten wood.

3. How natural is it for those who observe this extreme, to run into the contrary! While they are strongly impressed with the absurdity of undervaluing reason, how apt are they to overvalue it! So much easier it is to run from east to west, than to stop at the middle point! Accordingly we are surrounded with those (we find them on every side) who lay it down as an undoubted principle, that reason is the highest gift of God. They paint it in the fairest colours; they extol it to the skies. They are fond of expatiating in its praise; they make it little less than divine. They are wont to describe it, as very near, if not quite infallible. They look upon it as the all-sufficient director of all the children of men; able, by its native light, to guide them into all truth, and lead them into all virtue.

4. They that are prejudiced against the Christian revelation, who do not receive the Scriptures as the oracles of God, almost universally run into this extreme; I have scarce known any exception; so do all, by whatever name they are called, who deny the Godhead of Christ. (Indeed some of these say, they do not deny his Godhead; but only his supreme Godhead. Nay, this is the same thing; for in denying him to be the supreme God, they deny him to be any God at all: unless they will assert that there are two gods; a great one, and a little one!) All these are vehement applauders of reason, as the great unerring guide. To these overvaluers of reason we may generally add, men of eminently strong understanding; who, because they do know more than most other men, suppose they can know all things. But we may like-

wise add, many who are in the other extreme; men of eminently weak understanding; men in whom pride (a very common case) supplies the void of sense; who do not suspect themselves to be blind, because they were always so.

5. Is there, then, no medium between these extremes; undervaluing and overvaluing reason? Certainly there is. But who is there to point it out?—to mark down the middle way? That great master of reason, Mr. Locke, has done something of the kind, something applicable to it, in one chapter of his essay concerning human understanding. But it is only remotely applicable to this; he does not come home to the point. The good and great Dr. Watts has wrote admirably well, both concerning reason and faith. But neither does any thing he has written point out the medium between valuing it too little and too much.

6. I would gladly endeavour, in some degree, to supply this grand defect; to point out, first, to the undervaluers of it, what reason can do; and then to the overvaluers of it, what reason cannot do.

But before either the one or the other can be done, it is absolutely necessary to define the term; to fix the precise meaning of the word in question. Unless this is done, men may dispute to the end of the world, without coming to any good conclusion. This is one great cause of the numberless altercations which have been on the subject. Very few of the disputants thought of this; of defining the word they were disputing about. The natural consequence was, they were just as far from an agreement at the end, as at the beginning.

I. 1. First, then, *reason* is sometimes taken for *argument*. So, "Give me a *reason* for your assertion." So in Isaiah: "Bring forth your strong *reasons;*" that is, your strong arguments. We use the word nearly in the same sense, when we say, "He has good *reasons* for what he does." It seems here to mean, he has sufficient *motives;* such as ought to influence a wise man. But how is the word to be understood, in the celebrated question concerning the "reasons of things?" Particularly when it is asked, *An rationes rerum sint æternæ?* Whether the reasons of things are eternal? Do not the "reasons of things" here mean, the *relations* of things to each other? But what are the *eternal relations* of *temporal* things? Of things which did not exist till yesterday? Could the relations of these things exist, before the things themselves had any existence? Is not, then, the talking of such relations, a flat contradiction? Yea, as palpable a one as can be put into words.

2. In another acceptation of the word, reason is much the same with *understanding:* it means a faculty of the human soul: that faculty which exerts itself in three ways: by simple apprehension, by judgment, and by discourse. *Simple apprehension* is barely conceiving a thing in the mind; the first and most simple act of the understanding. *Judgment* is the determining that the things before conceived, either agree with, or differ from each other. *Discourse*, strictly speaking, is the motion or progress of the mind, from one judgment to another. The faculty of the soul which includes these three operations, I here mean by the term *reason.*

3. Taking the word in this sense, let us now impartially consider, first, What is it that reason can do? And who can deny that it can do much, very much, in the affairs of common life? To begin at the lowest point:

it can direct servants how to perform the various works wherein they are employed; to discharge their duty either in the meanest offices, or in any of a higher nature. It can direct the husbandman at what time and in what manner, to cultivate his ground; to plough, to sow, to reap, to bring in his corn, to breed and manage his cattle, and to act with prudence and propriety in every part of his employment. It can direct artificers how to prepare the various sorts of apparel, and a thousand necessaries and conveniences of life, not only for themselves and their households, but for their neighbours, whether nigh or afar off. It can direct those of higher abilities, to plan and execute works of a more elegant kind. It can direct the painter, the statuary, the musician, to excel in the stations wherein providence has placed them. It can direct the mariner to steer his course over the bosom of the great deep. It enables those who study the laws of their country, to defend the property, or life, of their fellow subjects; and those who study the art of healing, to cure most of the maladies to which we are exposed in our present state.

4. To ascend higher still: it is certain, reason can assist us in going through the whole circle of arts and sciences: of grammar, rhetoric, logic, natural and moral philosophy, mathematics, algebra, metaphysics. It can teach whatever the skill or industry of man has invented for some thousand years. It is absolutely necessary for the due discharge of the most important offices; such as are those of magistrates, whether of an inferior or superior rank; and those of subordinate or supreme governors, whether of states, provinces, or kingdoms.

5. All this, few men in their senses will deny. No thinking man can doubt, but reason is of considerable service, in all things relating to the present world. But suppose we speak of higher things; the things of another world; what can reason do here? Is it a help or a hinderance of religion? It may do much in the affairs of men; but what can it do in the things of God?

6. This is a point that deserves to be deeply considered. If you ask, What can reason do in religion? I answer, It can do exceeding much, both with regard to the foundation of it, and the superstructure.

The foundation of true religion stands upon the oracles of God. It is built upon the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone. Now of what excellent use is reason, if we would either understand ourselves, or explain to others, those living oracles? And how is it possible without it, to understand the essential truths contained therein? A beautiful summary of which we have in that which is called the apostles' creed. Is it not reason (assisted by the Holy Ghost) which enables us to understand what the Holy Scriptures declare, concerning the being and attributes of God?—concerning his eternity and immensity; his power, wisdom, and holiness? It is by reason that God enables us, in some measure, to comprehend his method of dealing with the children of men; the nature of his various dispensations, of the old and new covenant, of the law and the gospel. It is by this we understand (his Spirit opening and enlightening the eyes of our understanding) what that repentance is, not to be repented of; what is that faith whereby we are saved; what is the nature and the condition of justification; what are the immediate, and what the subsequent fruits of it. By reason we learn what is that new birth, without which we

cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven; and what that holiness is, without which no man shall see the Lord. By the due use of reason, we come to know, what are the tempers implied in inward holiness; and what it is to be outwardly holy; holy in all manner of conversation: in other words, what is the mind that was in Christ; and what it is to walk as Christ walked.

7. Many particular cases will occur, with respect to several of the foregoing articles, in which we shall have occasion for all our understanding, if we would keep a conscience void of offence. Many cases of conscience are not to be solved, without the utmost exercise of our reason. The same is requisite in order to understand, and to discharge our ordinary relative duties; the duties of parents and children, of husbands and wives, and (to name no more) of masters and servants. In all these respects, and in all the duties of common life, God has given us our reason for a guide. And it is only by acting up to the dictates of it, by using all the understanding which God hath given us, that we can have a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man.

8. Here then there is a large field indeed, wherein reason may expatiate and exercise all its powers. And if reason can do all this, both in civil and religious things, what is it that it cannot do?

We have, hitherto, endeavoured to lay aside all prejudice, and to weigh the matter calmly and impartially. The same course let us take still: let us now coolly consider, without prepossession on any side, what it is, according to the best light we have, that reason cannot do?

II. 1. And, first, reason cannot produce faith. Although it is always consistent with reason, yet reason cannot produce faith, in the scriptural sense of the word. Faith, according to Scripture, is "an evidence," or conviction, "of things not seen." It is a divine evidence, bringing a full conviction, of an invisible eternal world. It is true, there was a kind of shadowy persuasion of this, even among the wiser heathens; probably from tradition, or from some gleams of light, reflected from the Israelites. Hence many hundred years before our Lord was born, the Greek poet uttered that great truth:

> "Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth
> Unseen, whether we wake, or if we sleep."

But this was little more than faint conjecture: it was far from a firm conviction: which reason, in its highest state of improvement, could never produce in any child of man.

2. Many years ago I found the truth of this by sad experience. After carefully heaping up the strongest arguments which I could find, either in ancient or modern authors, for the very being of a God, and (which is nearly connected with it) the existence of an invisible world; I have wandered up and down, musing with myself; "What if all these things which I see around me, this earth and heaven, this universal frame, has existed from eternity? What if that melancholy supposition of the old poet be the real case?

> Οιη περ φυλλων γενεη, τοιηδε και ἀνρωι·

What if the generation of men be exactly parallel with the generation of leaves? If the earth drops its successive inhabitants, just as the tree drops its leaves? What if that saying of a great man be really true;

> Post mortem nihil est; ipsaque mors nihil?
> Death is nothing, and nothing is after death?

How am I sure that this is not the case; that I have not followed cunningly devised fables?"—And I have pursued the thought, till there was no spirit in me; and I was ready to choose strangling rather than life.

3. But in a point of such unspeakable importance, do not depend upon the word of another; but retire for a while from the busy world, and make the experiment yourself. Try whether *your* reason will give you a clear satisfactory evidence of the invisible world. After the prejudices of education are laid aside, produce your strong reasons for the existence of this. Set them all in array; silence all objections; and put all your doubts to flight. Alas, you cannot, with all your understanding. You may repress them for a season. But how quickly will they rally again, and attack you with redoubled violence! And what can poor reason do for your deliverance? The more vehemently you struggle, the more deeply you are entangled in the toils; and you find no way to escape.

4. How was the case with that great admirer of reason, the author of the maxim above cited? I mean, the famous Mr. Hobbes. None will deny that he had a strong understanding. But did it produce in him a full and satisfactory conviction of an invisible world? Did it open the eyes of his understanding, to see

"Beyond the bounds of this diurnal sphere?"

Oh no! Far from it! His dying words ought never to be forgotten. "Where are you going, sir?" said one of his friends. He answered, "I am taking a leap in the dark!" and died. Just such an evidence of the invisible world can bare reason give to the wisest of men!

5. Secondly, reason alone cannot produce hope in any child of man: I mean, scriptural hope, whereby we "rejoice in hope of the glory of God:" that hope which St. Paul in one place terms, "tasting the powers of the world to come;" in another, the "sitting in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:" that which enables us to say, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again unto a lively hope;—to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away; which is reserved in heaven for us." This hope can only spring from Christian faith: therefore, where there is not faith, there is not hope. Consequently, reason, being unable to produce faith, must be equally unable to produce hope. Experience confirms this likewise. How often have I laboured, and that with my might, to beget this hope in myself! But it was lost labour: I could no more acquire this hope of heaven, than I could touch heaven with my hand. And whoever of you makes the same attempt will find it attended with the same success. I do not deny, that a self deceiving enthusiast may work in himself a kind of hope: he may work himself up into a lively imagination; into a sort of pleasing dream: he may "compass himself about," as the prophet speaks, "with sparks of his own kindling:" but this cannot be of long continuance: in a little while the bubble will surely break. And what will follow? "This shall ye have at my hand, saith the Lord, ye shall lie down in sorrow."

6. If reason could have produced a hope full of immortality in any child of man, it might have produced it in that great man, whom Justin Martyr scruples not to call, "a Christian before Christ." For who that was not favoured with the written word of God, ever excelled, yea, or

equalled Socrates? In what other heathen can we find so strong an understanding, joined with so consummate virtue? But had he really this hope? Let him answer for himself. What is the conclusion of that noble apology, which he made before his unrighteous judges? "And now, oh judges! ye are going hence to live; and I am going hence to die: which of these is best, the gods know; but, I suppose, no man does." No man knows! How far is this from the language of the little Benjamite? "I desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better." And how many thousands are there at this day, even in our own nation, young men and maidens, old men and children, who are able to witness the same good confession?

7 But who is able to do this, by the force of his reason, be it ever so highly improved? One of the most sensible and most amiable heathens that have lived since our Lord died, even though he governed the greatest empire in the world, was the emperor Adrian. It is his well known saying: "A prince ought to resemble the sun: he ought to shine on every part of his dominion; and to diffuse his salutary rays in every place where he comes." And his life was a comment upon his word. wherever he went, he was executing justice, and showing mercy. Was not he then, at the close of a long life, full of immortal hope? We are able to answer this from unquestionable authority; from his own dying words. How inimitably pathetic!

Adriani morientis ad animam suam.

Dying Adrian to his soul:—

Animula, vagula, blandula,
Hospes, comesque corporis,
Quæ nunc abibis in loca,
Pallidula, rigida, nudula,
Nec, ut soles, dabis jocos!

Which the English reader may see translated into our own language, with all the spirit of the original.

"Poor, little, pretty, fluttering thing,
Must we no longer live together?
And dost thou prune thy trembling wing,
To take thy flight, thou know'st not whither?

Thy pleasing vein, thy humorous folly,
Lies all neglected, all forgot!
And pensive, wavering, melancholy,
Thou hop'st, and fear'st, thou know'st not what."

8. Thirdly, Reason, however cultivated and improved, cannot produce the love of God; which is plain from hence: it cannot produce either faith or hope; from which alone this love can flow. It is then only, when we "behold" by faith, "what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us," in giving his only Son, that we might not perish, but have everlasting life, that "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." It is only then, when we "rejoice in hope of the glory of God," that "we love him, because he first loved us." But what can cold reason do in this matter? It may present us with fair ideas; it can draw a fine picture of love; but this is only a painted fire. And farther than this, reason cannot go. I made the trial for many years. I collected the finest hymns, prayers, and meditations, which I could find in any language; and I said, sung,

or read them over and over, with all possible seriousness and attention. But still I was like the bones in Ezekiel's vision: "the skin covered them above; but there was no breath in them."

9. And as reason cannot produce the love of God, so neither can it produce the love of our neighbour: a calm, generous, disinterested benevolence to every child of man. This earnest, steady good will to our fellow creatures, never flowed from any fountain, but gratitude to our Creator. And if this be (as a very ingenious man supposes) the very essence of virtue, it follows that virtue can have no being, unless it spring from the love of God. Therefore, as reason cannot produce this love so neither can it produce virtue.

10. And as it cannot give either faith, hope, love, or virtue, so it cannot give happiness; since, separate from these, there can be no happiness for any intelligent creature. It is true, those who are void of all virtue, may have pleasures, such as they are; but happiness they have not, cannot have. No:

> "Their joy is all sadness; their mirth is all vain;
> Their laughter is madness; their pleasure is pain!"

Pleasures! shadows! dreams! fleeting as the wind! unsubstantial as the rainbow! As unsatisfying to the poor gasping soul,

> "As the gay colours of an eastern cloud."

None of these will stand the test of reflection: if thought comes the bubble breaks!

Suffer me now to add a few plain words, first to you who undervalue reason. Never more declaim in that wild, loose, ranting manner, against this precious gift of God. Acknowledge "the candle of the Lord," which he hath fixed in our souls for excellent purposes. You see how many admirable ends it answers, were it only in the things of this life: of what unspeakable use is even a moderate share of reason, in all our worldly employments, from the lowest and meanest offices of life, through all the intermediate branches of business; till we ascend to those that are of the highest importance and the greatest difficulty.

When, therefore, you despise or depreciate reason, you must not imagine you are doing God service: least of all, are you promoting the cause of God, when you are endeavouring to exclude reason out of religion. Unless you wilfully shut your eyes, you cannot but see of what service it is both in laying the foundation of true religion, under the guidance of the Spirit of God, and in raising the superstructure. You see it directs us in every point, both of faith and practice: it guides us with regard to every branch both of inward and outward holiness. Do we not glory in this, that the whole of our religion is a "reasonable service?" Yea, and that every part of it, when it is duly performed, is the highest exercise of our understanding?

Permit me to add a few words to you, likewise, who overvalue reason. Why should you run from one extreme to the other? Is not the middle way best? Let reason do all that reason can: employ it as far as it will go. But, at the same time, acknowledge it is utterly incapable of giving either faith, or hope, or love; and, consequently, of producing either real virtue, or substantial happiness. Expect these from a higher source, even from the Father of the spirits of all flesh. Seek and receive them, not as your own acquisition; but as the gift of God. Lift up your hearts to him who "giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not."

He alone can give that faith which is "the evidence" and conviction "of things not seen;" he alone can "beget you unto a lively hope" of an inheritance eternal in the heavens; and he alone can "shed his love abroad in your heart, by the Holy Ghost given unto you." Ask, therefore, and it shall be given you! Cry unto him, and you shall not cry in vain! How can you doubt? "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven, give the Holy Ghost unto them that ask him?" So shall you be living witnesses, that wisdom, holiness, and happiness, are one; are inseparably united; and are, indeed, the beginning of that eternal life, which God hath given us in his Son.

SERMON LXXVI.—*Of Good Angels.*

"Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" Heb. i, 14.

1. MANY of the ancient heathens had (probably from tradition) some notion of good and evil angels. They had some conception of a superior order of beings, between men and God, whom the Greeks generally termed demons, (*knowing ones*,) and the Romans, genii. Some of these they supposed to be kind and benevolent, delighting in doing good: others, to be malicious and cruel, delighting in doing evil. But their conceptions both of one and the other, were crude, imperfect, and confused; being only fragments of truth, partly delivered down by their forefathers, and partly borrowed from the inspired writings.

2. Of the former, the benevolent kind, seems to have been the celebrated demon of Socrates; concerning which so many and so various conjectures have been made in succeeding ages. "This gives me notice," said he, "every morning, of any evil which will befall me that day." A late writer, indeed, (I suppose one that hardly believes the existence of either angel or spirit,) has published a dissertation, wherein he labours to prove, that the demon of Socrates was only his reason. But it was not the manner of Socrates to speak in such obscure and ambiguous terms. If he had meant his reason, he would, doubtless, have said so. But this could not be his meaning: for it was impossible his reason should give him notice every morning, of every evil which would befall him in that day. It does not lie within the province of reason, to give such notice of future contingencies. Neither does this odd interpretation in any wise agree with the inference which he himself draws from it. "My demon," says he, "did not give me notice this morning of any evil that was to befall me to day. Therefore I cannot regard as any evil, my being condemned to die." Undoubtedly it was some spiritual being: probably one of these ministering spirits.

3. An ancient poet, one who lived several ages before Socrates, speaks more determinately on this subject. Hesiod does not scruple to say,

"Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth unseen."

Hence, it is probable, arose the numerous tales about the exploits of their demi-gods: *minorum gentium*. Hence their satyrs, fauns, nymphs of every kind; wherewith they supposed both the sea and land to be

filled. But how empty, childish, unsatisfactory, are all the accounts they give of them! as, indeed, accounts that depend upon broken, uncertain tradition can hardly fail to be.

4. Revelation only is able to supply this defect: this only gives us a clear, rational, consistent account of those whom our eyes have not seen, nor our ears heard; of both good and evil angels. It is my design to speak, at present, only of the former; of whom we have a full, though brief account in these words: "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister unto them that shall be heirs of salvation?"

I. 1. The question is, according to the manner of the apostle, equivalent to a strong affirmation. And hence we learn, first, that with regard to their essence, or nature, they are all spirits; not material beings; not clogged with flesh and blood like us; but having bodies, if any, not gross and earthly like ours, but of a finer substance; resembling fire or flame, more than any other of these lower elements. And is not something like this intimated in those words of the psalmist; "Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire?" Psa. civ, 4. As spirits, he has endued them with understanding, will, or affections, (which are, indeed, the same thing; as the affections are only the will exerting itself various ways,) and liberty. And are not these, understanding, will, and liberty, essential to, if not the essence of, a spirit?

2. But who of the children of men can comprehend, what is the *understanding* of an angel? Who can comprehend how far their *sight* extends? Analogous to sight in men, though not the same; but thus we are constrained to speak through the poverty of human language. Probably not only over one hemisphere of the earth; yea, or,

"Tenfold the length of this terrene;"

or even of the solar system; but so far as to take in one view the whole extent of the creation! And we cannot conceive any defect in their perception; neither any error in their understanding. But in what manner do they use their understanding? We must in no wise imagine, that they creep from one truth to another, by that slow method which we call reasoning. Undoubtedly they see, at one glance, whatever truth is presented to their understanding; and that with all the certainty and clearness, that we mortals see the most self evident axiom. Who then can conceive the extent of their *knowledge?* Not only of the nature, attributes, and works of God; whether of creation or providence; but of the circumstances, actions, words, tempers, yea, and thoughts of men. For although, "God" only "knows the hearts of all men," ("unto whom are known all his works,") together with the changes they undergo, "from the beginning of the world;" yet we cannot doubt but his angels know the hearts of those to whom they more immediately minister. Much less can we doubt of their knowing the thoughts that are in our hearts at any particular time. What should hinder their seeing them as they arise? Not the thin veil of flesh and blood. Can these intercept the view of a spirit? Nay,

"Walls within walls no more its passage bar,
Than unopposing space of liquid air."

Far more easily, then, and far more perfectly than we can read a man's thoughts in his face, do these sagacious beings read our thoughts just as they rise in our hearts; inasmuch as they see the kindred spirit, more clearly than we see the body. If this seem strange to any, who

had not adverted to it before, let him only consider: suppose my spirit was out of the body, could not an angel see my thoughts? Even without my uttering any words? (if words are used in the world of spirits.) And cannot that ministering spirit see them just as well now I am in the body? It seems, therefore, to be an unquestionable truth, (although perhaps not commonly observed,) that angels know not only the words and actions, but also the thoughts of those to whom they minister. And indeed without this knowledge, they would be very ill qualified to perform various parts of their ministry.

3. And what an inconceivable degree of *wisdom* must they have acquired by the use of their amazing faculties; over and above that with which they were originally endued, in the course of more than six thousand years! (That they have existed so long we are assured; for they "sang together when the foundations of the earth were laid.") How immensely must their wisdom have increased, during so long a period, not only by surveying the hearts and ways of men in their successive generations; but by observing the works of God; his works of creation, his works of providence, his works of grace: and, above all, by "continually beholding the face of their Father which is in heaven?"

4. What measures of *holiness*, as well as wisdom, have they derived from this inexhaustible ocean!

> "A boundless, fathomless abyss,
> Without a bottom or a shore!"

Are they not hence, by way of eminence, styled *the holy angels?* What goodness, what philanthropy, what love to man, have they drawn from those rivers that are at his right hand? Such as we cannot conceive to be exceeded by any but that of God our Saviour. And they are still drinking in more love from this "Fountain of living water."

5. Such is the knowledge and wisdom of the angels of God, as we learn from his own oracles. Such are their holiness and goodness. And how astonishing is their *strength!* Even a fallen angel is styled by an inspired writer, "the prince of the power of the air." How terrible a proof did he give of this power, in suddenly raising the whirlwind, which "smote the four corners of the house," and destroyed all the children of Job at once! chap. i. That this was his work, we may easily learn from the command to "save his life." But he gave a far more terrible proof of his strength, (if we suppose that "messenger of the Lord" to have been an evil angel; as is not at all improbable,) when he smote with death a hundred, four score and five thousand Assyrians, in one night; nay, possibly in one hour, if not one moment. Yet a strength abundantly greater than this, must have been exerted by that angel (whether he was an angel of light or of darkness; which is not determined by the text) who smote, in one hour, "all the first-born of Egypt, both of man and beast." For considering the extent of the land of Egypt, the immense populousness thereof, and the innumerable cattle fed in their houses, and grazing in their fruitful fields; the men and beasts who were slain in that night, must have amounted to several millions! And if this be supposed to have been an evil angel, must not a good angel be as strong, yea stronger than him? For surely any good angel must have more power than even an *archangel ruined.* And what power must the "four angels" in the revelation have, who were appointed to "keep the four winds of heaven?" There seems, there-

fore, no extravagance in supposing, that, if God were pleased to permit, any of the angels of light could heave the earth and all the planets out of their orbits; yea, that he could arm himself with all these elements and crush the whole frame of nature. Indeed we do not know how to set any bounds to the strength of these first-born children of God.

6. And although none but their great Creator is omnipresent; although none besides him can ask, "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" yet, undoubtedly, he has given an immense sphere of action (though not unbounded) to created spirits. "The prince of the kingdom of Persia," mentioned Dan. x, 13, though probably an evil angel, seems to have had a sphere of action, both of knowledge and power, as extensive as that vast empire. And the same, if not greater, we may reasonably ascribe to the good angel, whom he withstood for one and twenty days.

7. The angels of God have great power, in particular, over the human body; power either to cause or remove pain and diseases; either to kill or to heal. They perfectly well understand whereof we are made: they know all the springs of this curious machine; and can, doubtless, by God's permission, touch any of them, so as either to stop or restore its motion. Of this power, even in an evil angel, we have a clear instance in the case of Job; whom he "smote with sore boils" all over, "from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot." And in that instant, undoubtedly, he would have killed him, if God had not saved his life. And, on the other hand, of the power of angels to heal, we have a remarkable instance in the case of Daniel. There remained no "strength in me," said the prophet; "neither was there breath in me." "Then one came and touched me, and said,—Peace be unto thee: be strong, yea, be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened," chap. x, 17, &c. On the other hand, when they are commissioned from above, may they not put a period to human life? There is nothing improbable, in what Dr. Parnell supposes the angel to say to the hermit, concerning the death of the child:

> "To all but thee, in fits he seemed to go:
> And 'twas my ministry to deal the blow."

From this great truth, the heathen poets probably derived their imagination, that Iris used to be sent down from heaven, to discharge souls out of their bodies. And perhaps the sudden death of many of the children of God, may be owing to the ministry of an angel.

III. So perfectly are the angels of God qualified for their high office. It remains to inquire, How they discharge their office? How do they minister to the heirs of salvation?

1. I will not say, that they do not minister at all to those who, through their obstinate impenitence and unbelief, disinherit themselves of the kingdom. This world is a world of mercy, wherein God pours down many mercies, even on the evil and the unthankful. And many of these, it is probable, are conveyed even to them, by the ministry of angels: especially, so long as they have any thought of God, or any fear of God, before their eyes. But it is their favourite employ, their peculiar office, to minister to the heirs of salvation; to those who are now "saved by faith;" or at least seeking God in sincerity.

2. Is it not their first care to minister to our souls? But we must not expect this will be done *with observation:* in such a manner, as that we may clearly distinguish their working from the workings of our own

minds. We have no more reason to look for this, than for their appearing in a visible shape. Without this, they can, in a thousand ways, apply to our understanding. They may assist us in our search after truth, remove many doubts and difficulties, throw light on what was before dark and obscure, and confirm us in the truth that is after godliness. They may warn us of evil in disguise; and place what is good in a clear, strong light. They may gently move our will, to embrace what is good, and fly from that which is evil. They may, many times, quicken our dull affections, increase our holy hope or filial fear, and assist us more ardently to love Him, who has first loved us. Yea, they may be sent of God to answer that whole prayer, put into our mouths by pious bishop Kenn:—

"Oh may thy angels while I sleep,
Around my bed their vigils keep;
Their love angelical instil;
Stop every avenue of ill.
May they celestial joys rehearse,
And thought to thought with me converse!"

Although the manner of this we shall not be able to explain while we dwell in the body.

3. May they not minister also to us, with respect to our bodies, in a thousand ways which we do not now understand? They may prevent our falling into many dangers, which we are not sensible of; and may deliver us out of many others, though we know not whence our deliverance comes. How many times have we been strangely and unaccountably preserved, in sudden and dangerous falls! And it is well if we did not impute that preservation to chance, or to our own wisdom or strength. Not so: it was God gave his angels charge over us, and in their hands they bore us up. Indeed, men of the world will always impute such deliverances to accident or second causes. To these, possibly, some of them might have imputed Daniel's preservation in the lions' den. But himself ascribes it to the true cause: "My God has sent his angel, and shut the mouths of the lions," Dan. vi, 22.

4. When a violent disease, supposed incurable, is totally and suddenly removed, it is by no means improbable, that this is effected by the ministry of an angel. And perhaps it is owing to the same cause, that a remedy is unaccountably suggested either to the sick person, or some attending upon him, by which he is entirely cured.

5. It seems, what are usually called divine dreams, may be frequently ascribed to angels. We have a remarkable instance of this kind related by one, that will hardly be thought an enthusiast; for he was a heathen, a philosopher, and an emperor: I mean Marcus Antoninus. "In his meditations, he solemnly thanks God for revealing to him, when he was at Cajeta, in a dream, what totally cured the bloody flux; which none of his physicians were able to heal." And why may we not suppose, that God gave him this notice by the ministry of an angel?

6. And how often does God deliver us from evil men, by the ministry of his angels! Overturning whatever their rage, or malice, or subtlety, had plotted against us. These are about their bed, and about their path, and privy to all their dark designs; and many of them, undoubtedly, they brought to nought, by means that we think not of. Sometimes they blast their favourite schemes in the beginning; sometimes, when they are just ripe for execution. And this they can do by a thou-

sand means that we are not aware of. They can check them in their mid career, by bereaving them of courage or strength; by striking faintness through their loins, or turning their wisdom into foolishness. Sometimes they bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and show us the traps that are laid for our feet. In these and various other ways, they hew the snares of the ungodly in pieces.

7. Another grand branch of their ministry is, to counterwork evil angels; who are continually going about, not only as roaring lions, seeking whom they may devour; but more dangerously still, as angels of light, seeking whom they may deceive. And how great is the number of these! Are they not as the stars of heaven for multitude? How great is their subtlety! matured by the experience of above six thousand years. How great is their strength! Only inferior to that of the angels of God. The strongest of the sons of men are but as grasshoppers before them. And what an advantage have they over us by that single circumstance, that they are invisible! As we have not strength to repel their force, so we have not skill to decline it. But the merciful Lord hath not given us up to the will of our enemies: "His eyes,' that is, his holy angels, "run to and fro over all the earth." And if our eyes were opened, we should see, "they are more that are for us, than they that are against us." We should see,

"A convoy attends,
A ministering host of invisible friends."

And whenever those assault us in soul or in body, these are able, willing, ready, to defend us; who are at least equally strong, equally wise, and equally vigilant. And who can hurt us, while we have armies of angels, and the God of angels, on our side?

8. And we may make one general observation: whatever assistance God gives to men by men, the same, and frequently in a higher degree, he gives to them by angels. Does he administer to us by men, light, when we are in darkness; joy, when we are in heaviness; deliverance, when we are in danger; ease and health, when we are sick or in pain? It cannot be doubted but he frequently conveys the same blessings by the ministry of angels: not so sensibly indeed, but full as effectually; though the messengers are not seen. Does he frequently deliver us by means of men, from the violence and subtlety of our enemies? Many times he works the same deliverance by those invisible agents. These shut the mouths of the human lions, so that they have no power to hurt us. And frequently they join with our human friends, (although neither they nor we are sensible of it,) giving them wisdom, courage, or strength, without which all their labour for us would be unsuccessful. Thus do they secretly minister, in numberless instances, to the heirs of salvation; while we hear only the voices of men, and see none but men round about us.

9. But does not the Scripture teach, "The help which is done upon earth, God doeth it himself?" Most certainly he does. And he is able to do it by his own immediate power. He has no need of using any instruments at all, either in heaven or earth. He wants not either angels or men, to fulfil the whole counsel of his will. But it is not his pleasure so to work. He never did; and we may reasonably suppose he never will. He has always wrought by such instruments as he pleases: but still it is God himself that doeth the work. Whatever help, therefore, we have,

either by angels or men, is as much the work of God, as if he were to put forth his almighty arm, and work without any means at all. But he has used them from the beginning of the world: in all ages he has used the ministry both of men and angels. And hereby, especially, is seen "the manifold wisdom of God in the church." Meantime the same glory redounds to him, as if he used no instruments at all.

10. The grand reason why God is pleased to assist men by men, rather than immediately by himself, is, undoubtedly, to endear us to each other, by these mutual good offices; in order to increase our happiness, both in time and eternity. And is it not for the same reason, that God is pleased to give his angels charge over us? Namely, that he may endear us and them to each other; that by the increase of our love and gratitude to them, we may find a proportionable increase of happiness, when we meet in our Father's kingdom. In the mean time, though we may not worship them, (worship is due only to our common Creator,) yet we may "esteem them very highly in love for their works' sake." And we may imitate them in all holiness; suiting our lives to the prayer our Lord himself has taught us; labouring to do his will on earth, as angels do it in heaven.

I cannot conclude this discourse better than in that admirable collect of our church:—

"Oh everlasting God, who hast ordained and constituted the services of angels and men in a wonderful manner; grant that as thy holy angels always do thee service in heaven, so by thy appointment they may succour and defend us on earth, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

SERMON LXXVII.—*Of Evil Angels.*

"We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places," Eph. vi, 12.

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1. IT has been frequently observed, that there are no gaps or chasms in the creation of God, but that all the parts of it are admirably connected together, to make up one universal whole. Accordingly there is one chain of beings, from the lowest to the highest point, from an unorganized particle of earth or water, to Michael the archangel. And the scale of creatures does not advance *per saltum*, by leaps, but by smooth and gentle degrees; although it is true these are frequently imperceptible to our imperfect faculties. We cannot, accurately, trace many of the intermediate links of this amazing chain, which are abundantly too fine to be discerned either by our senses or understanding.

2. We can only observe, in a gross and general manner, rising one above another; first, inorganical earth; then minerals and vegetables, in their several orders; afterwards, insects, reptiles, fishes, beasts, men, and angels. Of angels indeed, we know nothing with any certainty but by revelation. The accounts which are left by the wisest of the ancients, or given by the modern heathens, being no better than silly, self-inconsistent fables, too gross to be imposed even upon children. But by divine revelation we are informed, that they were all created holy and happy; yet they did not all continue as they were created: some

kept, but some left their first estate. The former of these are now good angels; the latter, evil angels. Of the former, I have spoke in the preceding discourse: I purpose now to speak of the latter. And highly necessary it is, that we should well understand what God has revealed concerning them, that they may gain no advantage over us by our ignorance; that we may know how to wrestle against them effectually. For "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in heavenly places."

3. This single passage seems to contain the whole scriptural doctrine concerning evil angels. I apprehend the plain meaning of it, literally translated, is this: "our wrestling;" the wrestling of real Christians; "is not" only, or chiefly, "against flesh and blood;" weak men, or fleshly appetites and passions; "but against principalities, against powers;" the mighty princes of all the infernal regions, with their combined forces: and great is their power, as is also the power of the legions they command: "against the rulers of the world:" (this is the literal meaning of the word.) Perhaps these principalities and powers remain chiefly in the citadel of their kingdom. But there are other evil spirits that range abroad, to whom the provinces of the world are committed:—"of the darkness;" chiefly the spiritual darkness; "of this age;" which prevails during the present state of things; "against wicked spirits;" eminently such; who mortally hate, and continually oppose holiness, and labour to infuse unbelief, pride, evil desire, malice, anger, hatred, envy, or revenge; "in heavenly places;" which were once their abode, and which they still aspire after.

In prosecuting this important subject, I will endeavour to explain,

I. The nature and properties of evil angels: and,

II. Their employment.

I. 1. With regard to the first, we cannot doubt, but all the angels of God were originally of the same nature. Unquestionably they were the highest order of created beings. They were spirits, pure, ethereal creatures, simple and incorruptible; if not wholly immaterial, yet certainly not incumbered with gross, earthly flesh and blood. As spirits, they were endued with understanding, with affections, and with liberty, or a power of self determination; so that it lay in themselves, either to continue in their allegiance to God, or to rebel against him.

2. And their original properties were, doubtless, the same with those of the holy angels. There is no absurdity in supposing Satan their chief, otherwise styled, "Lucifer, son of the morning," to have been, at least, "one of the first, if not the first archangel." Like the other sons of the morning, they had a height and depth of understanding quite incomprehensible to us. In consequence of this, they had such knowledge and wisdom, that the wisest of the children of men (had men then existed) would have been mere idiots in comparison of them. Their strength was equal to their knowledge; such as it cannot enter into our heart to conceive: neither can we conceive to how wide a sphere of action, either their strength or their knowledge extended. Their number God alone can tell: doubtless it was only less than infinite. And a third part of these stars of heaven the arch rebel drew after him.

3. We do not exactly know, (because it is not revealed in the oracles of God,) either what was the occasion of their apostasy, or what

effect it immediately produced upon them. Some have, not improbably, supposed, that when God published "the decree," (mentioned Psalm ii. 6, 7,) concerning the kingdom of his only begotten Son, to be over all creatures; these first born of creatures gave place to pride, comparing themselves to him: (possibly intimated by the very name of Satan, Lucifer, or Michael, which means, *who is like God?*) It may be, Satan then first giving way to temptation, said in his heart, "I too will have my throne. I will sit upon the sides of the north! I will be like the Most High!" But how did the mighty then fall! What an amazing loss did they sustain! If we allow of them all, what our poet supposes concerning their chief in particular:

> "His form had not yet lost
> All its original brightness, nor appear'd
> Less than archangel ruin'd, and the excess
> Of glory obscured."

If we suppose their outward form was not entirely changed; (though it must have been in a great degree; because the evil disposition of the mind must dim the lustre of the visage;) yet what an astonishing change was wrought within, when angels became devils! When the holiest of all the creatures of God became the most unholy!

4. From the time that they shook off their allegiance to God, they shook off all goodness, and contracted all those tempers which are most hateful to him, and most opposite to his nature. And ever since they are full of pride, arrogance, haughtiness, exalting themselves above measure; and although so deeply depraved through their inmost frame, yet admiring their own perfections. They are full of envy, if not against God himself; (and even that is not impossible, seeing they formerly aspired after his throne;) yet against all their fellow creatures; against the angels of God, who now enjoy the heaven from which they fell; and much more against those worms of the earth, who are now called to "inherit the kingdom." They are full of cruelty, of rage against all the children of men, whom they long to inspire with the same wickedness with themselves, and to involve in the same misery.

5. In the prosecution of this infernal design, they are diligent in the highest degree. To find out the most effectual means of putting it into execution, they apply to this end, the whole force of their angelical understanding; and they second it with their whole strength, so far as God is pleased to permit. But it is well for mankind, that God hath set them their bounds which they cannot pass. He hath said to the fiercest and strongest of the apostate spirits, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther." Otherwise how easily and how quickly might one of them overturn the whole frame of nature! How soon would they involve all in one common ruin, or, at least, destroy man from the face of the earth! And they are indefatigable in their bad work: they never are faint or weary. Indeed it seems, no spirits are capable of weariness but those that inhabit flesh and blood.

6. One circumstance more we may learn from the Scripture concerning the evil angels: they do not wander at large, but are all united under one common head. It is he that is styled by our blessed Lord, "The prince of this world:" yea, the apostle does not scruple to call him, "The god of this world." He is frequently styled Satan, the adversary; being the great adversary both of God and man. He is

termed, "The devil," by way of eminence;—"Apollyon," or the destroyer;—"The old serpent;" from his beguiling Eve under that form;—and, "The angel of the bottomless pit." We have reason to believe that the other evil angels are under his command; that they are ranged by him according to their several orders; that they are appointed to their several stations, and have, from time to time, their several works and offices assigned them. And, undoubtedly, they are connected (though we know not how; certainly not by love) both to him and to each other.

II. But what is the employment of evil angels? This is the second point to be considered.

1. They are (remember! so far as God permits) Κοσμοκρατορες;—*governors of the world!* So that there may be more ground than we are apt to imagine, for that strange expression of Satan, Matt. iv, 8, 9, when he showed our Lord "all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;" "all these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." It is a little more particularly expressed in the fourth chapter of St. Luke; "The devil showed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time." (Such an astonishing measure of power is still left in the prince of darkness!) "And the devil said, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will, I give it," ver. 5, 6. They are "the rulers of the darkness of this age;" (so the words are literally translated;) of the present state of things, during which "the whole world lieth in the wicked one." He is the element of the children of men; only those who fear God being excepted. He and his angels, in connection with, and in subordination to him, dispose all the ignorance, all the error, all the folly, and particularly all the wickedness of men, in such a manner as may most hinder the kingdom of God, and most advance the kingdom of darkness.

2. "But has every man a particular evil angel, as well as a good one, attending him?" This has been an exceeding ancient opinion, both among the Christians, and the Jews before them: but it is much doubted, whether it can be sufficiently proved from Scripture. Indeed it would not be improbable, that there is a particular evil angel with every man, if we were assured there is a good one. But this cannot be inferred from those words of our Lord concerning little children: "In heaven their angels do continually see the face of their Father which is in heaven." This only proves, that there are angels who are appointed to take care of little children: it does not prove, that a particular angel is allotted to every child. Neither is it proved by the words of Rhoda, who, hearing the voice of Peter, said, "It is his angel." We cannot infer any more from this, even suppose *his angel*, means his guardian angel, than that Rhoda believed the doctrine of guardian angels; which was then common among the Jews. But still it will remain a disputable point, (seeing revelation determines nothing concerning it,) whether every man is attended either by a particular good, or a particular evil angel.

3. But whether or no particular men are attended by particular evil spirits, we know that Satan and all his angels are continually warring against us, and watching over every child of man. They are ever watching to see whose outward or inward circumstances, whose pros-

perity or adversity, whose health or sickness, whose friends or enemies, whose youth or age, whose knowledge or ignorance, whose blindness or idleness, whose joy or sorrow, may lay them open to temptation. And they are perpetually ready to make the utmost advantage of every circumstance. These skilful wrestlers espy the smallest slip we make, and avail themselves of it immediately; as they also are "about our bed, and about our path, and spy out all our ways." Indeed each of them "walketh about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour;" or whom he may "beguile through his subtlety, as the serpent beguiled Eve." Yea, and in order to do this the more effectually, they transform themselves into angels of light. Thus,

"With rage that never ends,
Their hellish arts they try:
Legions of dire, malicious fiends,
And spirits enthroned on high."

4. It is by these instruments chiefly that the "foolish hearts" of those that know not God "are darkened:" yea, they frequently darken, in a measure, the hearts of them that do know God. The "god of this world" knows how to blind our hearts, to spread a cloud over our understanding, and to obscure the light of those truths, which, at other times, shine as bright as the noon day sun. By this means he assaults our faith, our evidence of things unseen. He endeavours to weaken that hope full of immortality, to which God had begotten us; and thereby to lessen, if he cannot destroy, our joy in God our Saviour. But, above all, he strives to damp our love of God, as he knows this is the spring of all our religion; and that, as this rises or falls, the work of God flourishes or decays in the soul.

5. Next to the love of God, there is nothing which Satan so cordially abhors as the love of our neighbour. He uses, therefore, every possible means to prevent or destroy this; to excite either private or public suspicions, animosities, resentment, quarrels; to destroy the peace of families, or of nations; and to banish unity and concord from the earth. And this, indeed, is the triumph of his art; to embitter the poor, miserable children of men against each other; and, at length, urge them to do his own work; to plunge one another into the pit of destruction.

6. This enemy of all righteousness is equally diligent to hinder every good word and work. If he cannot prevail upon us to do evil, he will, if possible, prevent our doing good. He is peculiarly diligent to hinder the work of God from spreading in the hearts of men. What pains does he take, to prevent or obstruct the general work of God! And how many are his devices to stop its progress in particular souls! To hinder their continuing or growing in grace, in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ! To lessen, if not destroy, that love, joy, peace; that long suffering, gentleness, goodness; that fidelity, meekness, and temperance; which our Lord works by his loving Spirit in them that believe, and wherein the very essence of religion consists.

7. To effect these ends, he is continually labouring with all his skill and power, to infuse evil thoughts of every kind into the hearts of men. And certainly it is as easy for a spirit to speak to our heart, as for a man to speak to our ears. But sometimes it is exceeding difficult to distinguish these from our own thoughts; those which he injects so

exactly resembling those which naturally arise in our own minds. Sometimes, indeed, we may distinguish one from the other by this circumstance: the thoughts which naturally arise in our minds, are generally, if not always, occasioned by, or at least connected with, some inward or outward circumstance that went before. But those that are preternaturally suggested, have frequently no relation to, or connection (at least none that we are able to discern) with any thing which preceded. On the contrary, they shoot in, as it were, across; and thereby show that they are of a different growth.

8. He likewise labours to awaken evil passions or tempers in our souls. He endeavours to inspire those passions and tempers, which are directly opposite to the "fruit of the Spirit." He strives to instil unbelief, atheism, ill will, bitterness, hatred, malice, envy; opposite to faith and love: fear, sorrow, anxiety, worldly care; opposite to peace and joy: impatience, ill nature, anger, resentment; opposite to long suffering, gentleness, meekness: fraud, guile, dissimulation; contrary to fidelity: love of the world, inordinate affection, foolish desires; opposite to the love of God. One sort of evil desires he may probably raise or inflame, by touching the springs of this animal machine. Endeavouring thus, by means of the body, to disturb or sully the soul.

9. And, in general, we may observe, that as no good is done, or spoken, or thought, by any man, without the assistance of God, working together *in* and *with* those that believe in him; so there is no evil done, or spoke, or thought, without the assistance of the devil, "who worketh with energy," with strong, though secret power, "in the children of disobedience." Thus he "entered into Judas," and confirmed him in the design of betraying his Master; thus he "put into the heart" of Ananias and Sapphira, "to lie unto the Holy Ghost;" and, in like manner, he has a share in all the actions, and words, and designs of evil men. As the children of God are "workers together with God," in every good thought, or word, or action; so the children of the devil are workers together with him, in every evil thought, or word, or work. So that, as all good tempers, and, remotely, all good words and actions, are the fruit of the good Spirit; in like manner, all evil tempers, with all the words and works which spring from them, are the fruit of the evil spirit: insomuch that all the "works of the flesh," of our evil nature, are likewise the "work of the devil."

10. On this account, because he is continually inciting men to evil, he is emphatically called, "the tempter." Nor is it only with regard to his own children, that he is thus employed: he is continually tempting the children of God also, and those that are labouring so to be.

> "A constant watch he keeps;
> He eyes them night and day;
> He never slumbers, never sleeps,
> Lest he should lose his prey."

Indeed the holiest of men, as long as they remain upon earth, are not exempt from his temptations. They cannot expect it; seeing "it is enough for the disciple to be as his Master:" and we know he was tempted to evil, till he said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

11. For such is the malice of the wicked one, that he will torment whom he cannot destroy. If he cannot entice men to sin, he will, so

far as he is permitted, put them to pain. There is no doubt but he is the occasion, directly or indirectly, of many of the pains of mankind, which those who can no otherwise account for them, lightly pass over as nervous. And innumerable accidents, as they are called, are, undoubtedly, owing to his agency: such as the unaccountable fright or falling of horses; the overturning of carriages; the breaking or dislocating of bones; the hurt done by the falling or burning of houses; by storms of wind, snow, rain, or hail; by lightning or earthquakes. But to all these, and a thousand more, this subtle spirit can give the appearance of accidents; for fear the sufferers, if they knew the real agents, should call for help on one that is stronger than him.

12. There is little reason to doubt, but many diseases likewise, both of the acute and chronical kind, are either occasioned or increased by diabolical agency: particularly those that begin in an instant, without any discernible cause, as well as those that continue, and perhaps gradually increase in spite of all the power of medicine. Here, indeed, "vain men" that "would be wise," again call in the nerves to their assistance. But is not this explaining *ignotum per ignotius?* A thing unknown by what is more unknown? For what do we know of the nerves themselves? Not even whether they are solid or hollow!

13. Many years ago, I was asking an experienced physician, and one particularly eminent for curing lunacy; "Sir, have you not seen reason to believe, that some lunatics are really demoniacs?" He answered, "Sir, I have been often inclined to think, that most lunatics are demoniacs. Nor is there any weight in that objection, that they are frequently cured by medicine: for so might any other disease, occasioned by an evil spirit, if God did not suffer him to repeat the stroke, by which that disease is occasioned."

14. This thought opens to a wider scene. Who can tell how many of those diseases, which we impute altogether to natural causes, may be really preternatural? What disorder is there in the human frame which an evil angel may not inflict? Cannot he smite us as he did Job, and that in a moment, with boils from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot? Cannot he, with equal ease, inflict any other, either external or internal malady? Could not he, in a moment, by divine permission, cast the strongest man down to the ground, and make him "wallow, foaming," with all the symptoms either of an epilepsy, or apoplexy? In like manner, it is easy for him to smite any one man, or every one in a city or nation, with a malignant fever, or with the plague itself, so that vain would be the help of man.

15. But that malice blinds the eyes of the wise, one would imagine so intelligent a being would not stoop so low, as it seems the devil sometimes does, to torment the poor children of men! For to him we may reasonably impute many little inconveniences which we suffer. "I believe (said that excellent man, the Marquis de Renty, when the bench on which he sat snapped in sunder without any visible cause) that Satan had a hand in it; making me to fall untowardly." I know not whether he may not have a hand in that unaccountable horror, with which many have been seized in the dead of night, even to such a degree, that all their bones have shook. Perhaps he has a hand also in those terrifying dreams which many have, even while they are in perfect health.

It may be observed, in all these instances, we usually say, "the devil;" as if there was one only; because these spirits, innumerable as they are, do all act in concert; and because we know not, whether one or more are concerned in this or that work of darkness.

It remains only to draw a few plain inferences from the doctrine which has been delivered.

1. And first, as a general preservative against all the rage, the power, and subtlety, of your great adversary, put on the panoply, "the whole armour of God;" universal holiness. See that "the mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus;" and that ye "walk as Christ also walked;" that ye have a "conscience void of offence, towards God and towards men." So shall ye be "able to withstand" all the force and all the stratagems of the enemy: so shall ye be able to "withstand in the evil day," in the day of sore temptation; and "having done all, to stand;" to remain in the posture of victory and triumph.

2. To his "fiery darts,"—his evil suggestions of every kind, blasphemous or unclean, though numberless as the stars of heaven,—oppose "the shield of faith." A consciousness of the love of Christ Jesus will effectually quench them all.

> "Jesus hath died for *you!*
> What can your faith withstand?
> Believe, hold fast your shield! and who
> Shall pluck you from his hand?"

3. If he inject doubts, whether you are a child of God; or fears, lest you should not endure to the end; "take to you for a helmet the hope of salvation." Hold fast that glad word, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a living hope of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." You will never be overthrown, you will never be staggered by your adversary, if you "hold fast the beginning of [this] confidence steadfast unto the end."

4. Whenever the "roaring lion, walking about and seeking whom he may devour" assaults you with all his malice, and rage, and strength; "resist [him] steadfast in the faith." Then is the time, having cried to the strong for strength, to "stir up the gift of God that is in you;" to summon all your faith, and hope, and love; to turn the attack in the name of the Lord, and in the power of his might; and "he will [soon] flee from you."

5. But "there is no temptation," says one, "greater than the being without temptation." When, therefore, this is the case; when Satan seems to be withdrawn; then beware, lest he hurt you more as a crooked serpent, than he could do as a roaring lion. Then take care you are not lulled into a pleasing slumber; lest he should beguile you as he did Eve, even in innocence; and insensibly draw you from your simplicity towards Christ; from seeking all your happiness in him.

6. Lastly, if he "transform himself into an angel of light," then are you in the greatest danger of all. Then have you need to beware, lest you also fall, where many mightier have been slain; then have you the greatest need to "watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation.' And if you continue so to do, the God whom you love and serve will deliver you. "The anointing of the Holy One shall abide with you, and teach you of all things." Your eye will pierce through snares;

you shall "know what that holy and acceptable and perfect will of God is," and shall hold on your way, till you "grow up in all things into him that is our head, even Christ Jesus."

SERMON LXXVIII.—*Of Hell.*

"Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched," Mark ix, 48.

1. EVERY truth which is revealed in the oracles of God, is undoubtedly of great importance. Yet it may be allowed, that some of those which are revealed therein, are of greater importance than others; as being more immediately conducive to the grand end of all, the eternal salvation of men. And we may judge of their importance, even from this circumstance: that they are not mentioned once only in the sacred writings, but are repeated over and over. A remarkable instance of this we have, with regard to the awful truth which is now before us. Our blessed Lord, who uses no superfluous words, who makes no "vain repetitions," repeats it over and over in the same chapter, and, as it were, in the same breath. So, verses 43, 44, "If thy hand offend thee;" if a thing or person as useful as a hand, be an occasion of sin, and there is no other way to shun that sin; "cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." So again, verses 45, 46, "If thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." And yet again, verses 47, 48, "If thine eye;" a person or thing as dear as thine eye; "offend thee;" hinder thy running the race which is set before thee; "pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

2. And let it not be thought, that the consideration of these terrible truths is proper only for enormous sinners. How is this supposition consistent with what our Lord speaks to those who were then, doubtless, the holiest men upon earth? When innumerable multitudes were gathered together, he said to his disciples, [the apostles,] "First of all, I say unto you, my friends, fear not them that can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I say unto you, Fear him, who after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him!" Luke xii, 1–5. Yea, fear him under this very notion, of having power to cast into hell: that is, in effect, fear, lest he should cast you into the place of torment. And this very fear, even in the children of God, is one excellent means of preserving them from it.

3. It behoves, therefore, not only the outcasts of men, but even *you, his friends;* you that fear and love God; deeply to consider what is revealed in the oracles of God concerning the future state of punishment. How widely distant is this from the most elaborate accounts which are given by the heathen authors! Their accounts are (in many particulars at least) childish, fanciful, and self inconsistent. So that

it is no wonder they did not believe themselves, but only related the tales of the vulgar. So Virgil strongly intimates, when, after the laboured account he had given of the shades beneath, he sends him that had related it out at the ivory gate, through which (as he tells us) only *dreams* pass: thereby giving us to know, that all the preceding account is no more than a dream. This he only insinuates; but his brother poet, Juvenal, speaks out flat and plain:

Esse aliquos manes, et subterranea regna,
Nec pueri credunt, nisi qui nondum ære lavantur.

"Even our children do not believe a word of the tales concerning another world."

4. Here, on the contrary, all is worthy of God, the Creator, the Governor of mankind. All is awful and solemn; suitable to his wisdom and justice, by whom "Tophet was ordained of old:" although originally prepared, not for the children of men, but "for the devil and his angels."

The punishment of those who, in spite of all the warnings of God, resolve to have their portion with the devil and his angels, will, according to the ancient, and not improper division, be either, *pœna damni*, what they lose; or *pœna sensus*, what they feel. After considering these separately, I shall touch on a few additional circumstances, and conclude with two or three inferences.

I. 1. And, first, let us consider the *pœna damni;* the punishment of loss. This commences in that very moment, wherein the soul is separated from the body; in that instant, the soul loses all those pleasures, the enjoyment of which depends on the outward senses. The smell, the taste, the touch, delight no more: the organs that ministered to them are spoiled, and the objects that used to gratify them, are removed far away. In the dreary regions of the dead, all these things are forgotten; or, if remembered, are only remembered with pain seeing they are gone for ever. All the pleasures of the imagination are at an end. There is no grandeur in the infernal regions; there is nothing beautiful in those dark abodes; no light but that of livid flames. And nothing new, but one unvaried scene of horror upon horror! There is no music but that of groans and shrieks; of weeping wailing, and gnashing of teeth; of curses and blasphemies against God, or cutting reproaches of one another. Nor is there any thing to gratify the sense of honour: no; they are the heirs of shame and everlasting contempt.

2. Thus are they totally separated from all the things they were fond of in the present world. At the same instant will commence another loss; that of all the *persons* whom they loved. They are torn away from their nearest and dearest relations; their wives, husbands, parents, children; and (what to some will be worse than all this) the friend which was as their own soul. All the pleasure they ever enjoyed in these, is lost, gone, vanished away: for there is no friendship in hell. Even the poet who affirms, (though I know not on what authority,)

"Devil with devil damn'd
Firm concord holds;"

does not affirm that there is any concord among the human fiends, that inhabit the great abyss.

3. But they will then be sensible of a greater loss, than all they have enjoyed on earth. They have lost their place in Abraham's bosom; in the paradise of God. Hitherto, indeed, it hath not entered into their hearts to conceive, what holy souls enjoy in the garden of God, in the society of angels, and of the wisest and best men that have lived from the beginning of the world; (not to mention the immense increase of knowledge which they will then, undoubtedly, receive;) but they will then fully understand the value of what they have vilely cast away.

4. But as happy as the souls in paradise are, they are preparing for far greater happiness. For paradise is only the porch of heaven; and it is there the spirits of just men are made perfect. It is in heaven only, that there is the fulness of joy; the pleasures that are at God's right hand for evermore. The loss of this, by those unhappy spirits, will be the completion of their misery. They will then know and feel, that God alone is the centre of all created spirits; and, consequently, that a spirit made for God, can have no rest out of him. It seems that the apostle had this in his view, when he spoke of those "who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord." Banishment from the presence of the Lord is the very essence of destruction, to a spirit that was made for God. And if that banishment last for ever, it is "everlasting destruction."

Such is the loss sustained by those miserable creatures, on whom that awful sentence will be pronounced; "Depart from me, ye cursed!" What an unspeakable curse, if there were no other! But, alas! this is far from being the whole: for, to the punishment of loss, will be added the punishment of sense. What they lose, implies unspeakable misery, which yet is inferior to what they feel. This it is, which our Lord expresses in those emphatical words: "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

II. 1. From the time that sentence was pronounced upon man; "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return;" it was the custom of all nations, so far as we can learn, to commit dust to dust: it seemed natural to restore the bodies of the dead to the general mother earth. But, in process of time, another method obtained, chiefly among the rich and great, of burning the bodies of their relations, and frequently in a grand magnificent manner: for which purpose they erected huge funeral piles, with immense labour and expense. By either of these methods the body of man was soon restored to its parent dust. Either the worm or the fire soon consumed the well wrought frame; after which the worm itself quickly died, and the fire was entirely quenched. But there is, likewise, a worm that belongs to the future state; and that is a worm that never dieth! and there is a fire hotter than that of the funeral pile; and it is a fire that will never be quenched!

2. The first thing intended by the worm that never dieth, seems to be a guilty conscience; including self condemnation, sorrow, shame, remorse, and a sense of the wrath of God. May not we have some conception of this by what is sometimes felt, even in the present world? Is it not of this, chiefly, that Solomon speaks, when he says, "The spirit of a man may bear his infirmities;" his infirmities, or griefs, of any other kind; "but a wounded spirit who can bear?" Who can

bear the anguish of an awakened conscience, penetrated with a sense of guilt, and the arrows of the Almighty sticking in the soul, and drinking up the spirit! How many of the stout hearted have sunk under it, and chose strangling rather than life! And yet what are these wounds, what is all this anguish of a soul while in this present world, in comparison of those they must suffer when their souls are wholly awakened to feel the wrath of an offended God! Add to these all unholy passions; fear, horror, rage, evil desires; desires that can never be satisfied. Add all unholy tempers; envy, jealousy, malice, and revenge, all of which will incessantly gnaw the soul, as the vulture was supposed to do the liver of Tityus. To these if we add hatred of God, and all his creatures; all these united together may serve to give us some little, imperfect idea of the worm that never dieth.

3. We may observe a remarkable difference in the manner wherein our Lord speaks concerning the two parts of the future punishment. He says, "Where *their* worm dieth not," of the one; "where *the* fire is not quenched," of the other. This cannot be by chance. What then is the reason for this variation of the expression?

Does it not seem to be this? *The fire* will be the same, essentially the same, to all that are tormented therein; only perhaps more intense to some than others, according to their degree of guilt; but *their worm* will not, cannot be the same: it will be infinitely varied, according to their various kinds, as well as degrees of wickedness. This variety will arise partly from the just judgment of God, "rewarding every man according to his works:" for we cannot doubt but this rule will take place, no less in hell than in heaven. As in heaven, "every man shall receive his own reward;" incommunicably his; according to his own labours; that is, the whole tenor of his tempers, thoughts, words, and actions;—so, undoubtedly, every man, in fact, will receive his own bad reward, according to his own bad labour. And this, likewise, will be incommunicably *his own;* even as his labour was. Variety of punishment will, likewise, arise from the very nature of the thing. As they that bring most holiness to heaven will find most happiness there; so, on the other hand, it is not only true, that the more wickedness a man brings to hell, the more misery he will find there; but that this misery will be infinitely varied according to the various kinds of his wickedness. It was, therefore, proper to say, *the fire*, in general; but *their worm* in particular.

4. But it has been questioned by some, "Whether there be any fire in hell?" That is, any material fire. Nay, if there be any fire, it is, unquestionably, material. For what is immaterial fire? The same as immaterial water or earth! Both the one and the other is absolute nonsense; a contradiction in terms. Either, therefore, we must affirm it to be material, or we deny its existence. But if we granted them, there is no fire at all there, what would they gain thereby? Seeing this is allowed, on all hands, that it is either fire or something worse. And consider this: does not our Lord speak, as if it were real fire? No one can deny or doubt of this. Is it possible then to suppose, that the God of truth would speak in this manner, if it were not so? Does he design to fright his poor creatures? What, with scarecrows? With vain shadows of things that have no being? Oh let not any one think so! Impute no such folly to the Most High!

5. But others aver, "it is not possible that fire should burn always. For by the immutable law of nature, it consumes whatever is thrown into it. And, by the same law, as soon as it has consumed its fuel, it is itself consumed; it goes out."

It is most true, that in the present constitution of things, during the present laws of nature, the element of fire does dissolve and consume whatever is thrown into it. But here is the mistake: the present laws of nature are not immutable. When the heavens and the earth shall flee away, the present scene will be totally changed; and, with the present constitution of things, the present laws of nature will cease. After this great change, nothing will be dissolved, nothing will be consumed any more. Therefore, if it were true, that fire consumes all things now, it would not follow that it would do the same after the whole frame of nature has undergone that vast, universal change.

6. I say, if it were true, that "fire consumes all things now." But, indeed, it is not true. Has it not pleased God to give us already some proof of what will be hereafter? Is not the *Linum Asbestum*, the incombustible flax, known in most parts of Europe? If you take a towel or handkerchief made of this, (one of which may now be seen in the British museum,) you may throw it into the hottest fire, and when it is taken out again, it will be observed, upon the nicest experiment, not to have lost one grain of its weight. Here, therefore, is a substance before our eyes, which even in the present constitution of things, (as if it were an emblem of things to come,) may remain in fire without being consumed.

7. Many writers have spoken of other bodily torments, added to the being cast into the lake of fire. One of these, even pious Kempis, supposes that misers, for instance, have melted gold poured down their throats; and he supposes many other particular torments to be suited to men's particular sins. Nay, our great poet himself supposes the inhabitants of hell to undergo a variety of tortures; not to continue always in the lake of fire, but to be frequently,

> "By harpy-footed furies, hauled"

into regions of ice; and then back again through

> "Extremes, by change more fierce:"

But I find no word, no tittle of this, not the least hint of it in all the Bible. And surely this is too awful a subject, to admit of such play of imagination. Let us keep to the written word. It is torment enough, to dwell with everlasting burnings.

8. This is strongly illustrated by a fabulous story, taken from one of the eastern writers, concerning a Turkish king, who, after he had been guilty of all manner of wickedness, once did a good thing: for seeing a poor man falling into a pit, wherein he must have inevitably perished, and kicking him from it, he saved his life. The story adds, that when, for his enormous wickedness, he was cast into hell, that foot wherewith he had saved the man's life, was permitted to lie out of the flames. But allowing this to be a real case, what a poor comfort would it be? What if both feet were permitted to lie out of the flames, yea, and both hands, how little would it avail! Nay, if all the body were taken out, and placed where no fire touched it, and only one hand or one foot kept in a burning fiery furnace; would the man, meantime, be much at ease? Nay, quite the contrary. Is it not common to say to a child. "Put your fin-

ger into that candle: can you bear it even for one minute? How then will you bear hell fire?" Surely it would be torment enough to have the flesh burnt off from only one finger. What then will it be, to have the whole body plunged into a lake of fire burning with brimstone!

III. It remains now only to consider two or three circumstances attending the never dying worm and the unquenchable fire.

1. And, first, consider the company wherewith every one is surrounded in that place of torment. It is not uncommon to hear even condemned criminals, in our public prisons, say; "Oh I wish I was hanged out of the way, rather than to be plagued with these wretches that are round about me." But what are the most abandoned wretches upon earth, compared to the inhabitants of hell? None of these are, as yet, perfectly wicked, emptied of every spark of good; certainly not till this life is at an end; probably not till the day of judgment. Nor can any of these exert, without control, their whole wickedness on their fellow creatures. Sometimes they are restrained by good men; sometimes even by bad. So even the tortures in the Romish inquisition are restrained by those that employ them, when they suppose the sufferer cannot endure any more. They then order the executioners to forbear; because it is contrary to the rules of the house, that a man should die upon the rack. And very frequently, when there is no human help, they are restrained by God, who hath set them their bounds, which they cannot pass, and saith, "Hitherto shall ye come, and no farther." Yea, so mercifully hath God ordained, that the very extremity of pain causes a suspension of it. The sufferer faints away; and so, for a time at least, sinks into insensibility. But the inhabitants of hell are perfectly wicked, having no spark of goodness remaining. And they are restrained by none from exerting to the uttermost their total wickedness. Not by *men;* none will be restrained from evil by his companions in damnation: and not by *God;* for he hath forgotten them; hath delivered them over to the tormentors. And the devils need not fear, like their instruments upon earth, lest they should expire under the torture. They can die no more: they are strong to sustain whatever the united malice, skill, and strength of angels can inflict upon them. And their angelic tormentors have time sufficient to vary their torments a thousand ways. How infinitely may they vary one single torment,—horrible appearances! Whereby, there is no doubt, an evil spirit, if permitted, could terrify the stoutest man upon earth to death.

2. Consider, secondly, that all these torments of body and soul are without intermission. They have no respite from pain; but "the smoke of their torment ascendeth up day and night." Day and night! That is, speaking according to the constitution of the present world; wherein God has wisely and graciously ordained, that day and night should succeed each other: so that in every four and twenty hours there comes a

> "Daily sabbath, made to rest
> Toiling man and weary beast."

Hence we seldom undergo much labour, or suffer much pain, before

> "Tired nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep,"

steals upon us by insensible degrees, and brings an interval of ease. But although the damned have uninterrupted night, it brings no interruption of their pain. No sleep accompanies that darkness: whatever ancient

or modern poets, either Homer or Milton, dream, there is no sleep either in hell or heaven. And be their suffering ever so extreme, be their pain ever so intense, there is no possibility of their fainting away; no, not for a moment.

Again: the inhabitants of earth are frequently diverted from attending to what is afflictive, by the cheerful light of the sun, the vicissitudes of the seasons, "the busy hum of men," and a thousand objects that roll around them in endless variety. But the inhabitants of hell have nothing to divert them from their torments, even for a moment:

"Total eclipse: no sun, no moon!"

No change of seasons, or of companions. There is no business; but one uninterrupted scene of horror, to which they must be all attention. They have no interval of inattention or stupidity: they are all eye, all ear, all sense. Every instant of their duration, it may be said of their whole frame, that they are

"tremblingly alive all o'er,
And smart and agonize at every pore!"

3. And of this duration there is no end! What a thought is this! Nothing but eternity is the term of their torment! And who can count the drops of rain, or the sands of the sea, or the days of eternity? Every suffering is softened, if there is any hope, though distant, of deliverance from it. But here,

"Hope never comes, that comes to all"

the inhabitants of the upper world! What! sufferings *never* to end!

"NEVER!—Where sinks the soul at that dread sound?
Into a gulf how dark, and how profound!"

Suppose millions of days, of years, of ages elapsed, still we are only on the threshold of eternity! Neither the pain of body or of soul is any nearer an end, than it was millions of ages ago. When they are cast into το πυρ, το ασβεστον,—(How emphatical! "The fire, the unquenchable,")—all is concluded: "Their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched!"

Such is the account which the Judge of all gives of the punishment which he has ordained for impenitent sinners. And what a counterbalance may the consideration of this be, to the violence of any temptation! In particular to the fear of man; the very use to which it is applied by our Lord himself: "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But fear him, who after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell," Luke xii, 4, 5.

What a guard may these considerations be against any temptation from pleasure! Will you lose, for any of these poor, earthly pleasures, which perish in the using, (to say nothing of the present substantial pleasures of religion,) the pleasures of paradise; such "as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into our hearts to conceive?" Yea, the pleasures of heaven, the society of angels, and of the spirits of just men made perfect; the conversing face to face with God your Father, your Saviour, your sanctifier; and the drinking of those rivers of pleasure that are at God's right hand for evermore?

Are you tempted by pain, either of body or mind? Oh compare present things with future! What is the pain of body which you do or may endure, to that of lying in a lake of fire burning with brimstone?

What is any pain of mind; any fear, anguish, sorrow, compared to the "worm that never dieth?" *That never dieth!* This is the sting of all! As for our pains on earth, blessed be God, they are not eternal. There are some intervals to relieve, and there is some period to finish them. When we ask a friend that is sick, How he does? "I am in pain now," says he, "but I hope to be easy soon." This is a sweet mitigation of the present uneasiness. But how dreadful would his case be if he should answer, "I am all over pain, and I shall be never eased of it. I lie under exquisite torment of body, and horror of soul; and I shall feel it *for ever!*" Such is the case of the damned sinners in hell. Suffer any pain, then, rather than come into that place of torment!

I conclude with one more reflection, taken from Dr. Watts:—"It demands our highest gratitude, that we, who have long ago deserved this misery, are not plunged into it. While there are thousands that have been adjudged to this place of punishment, before they had continued so long in sin as many of us have done, what an instance is it of divine goodness, that we are not under this fiery vengeance! Have we not seen many sinners, on our right and our left, cut off in their sins? And what but the tender mercy of God, hath spared us week after week, month after month, and given us space for repentance? What shall we render unto the Lord, for all his patience and long suffering, even to this day? How often have we incurred the sentence of condemnation by our repeated rebellion against God? And yet we are still alive in his presence, and are hearing the words of hope and salvation. Oh let us look back and shudder at the thoughts of that dreadful precipice, on the edge of which we have so long wandered! Let us fly for refuge to the hope that is set before us, and give a thousand thanks to the divine mercy, that we are not plunged into this perdition!"

SERMON LXXIX.—*Of the Church.*

"I beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all," Ephes. iv, 1–6.

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1. How much do we almost continually hear about the church! With many it is matter of daily conversation. And yet how few understand what they talk of: how few know what the term means! A more ambiguous word than this, *the church*, is scarce to be found in the English language. It is sometimes taken for a building, set apart for public worship; sometimes for a congregation, or body of people, united together in the service of God. It is only in the latter sense that it is taken in the ensuing discourse.

2. It may be taken indifferently for any number of people, how small or great soever. As, "where two or three are met together in his name," there is Christ; so, (to speak with St. Cyprian,) "where two or three believers are met together, there is a church." Thus it is that St. Paul, writing to Philemon, mentions "the church which was in his house:" plainly signifying, that even a Christian family may be termed a church.

3. Several of those whom God hath *called out of* the world, (so the original word properly signifies,) uniting together in one congregation, formed a larger church; as the church at Jerusalem: that is, all those in Jerusalem whom God had so called. But considering how swiftly these were multiplied, after the day of pentecost, it cannot be supposed that they could continue to assemble in one place; especially as they had not then any large place, neither would they have been permitted to build one. In consequence, they must have divided themselves, even at Jerusalem, into several distinct congregations. In like manner, when St. Paul, several years after, wrote to the church in Rome, (directing his letter, "To all that are in Rome, called to be saints,") it cannot be supposed that they had any one building capable of containing them all; but they were divided into several congregations, assembling in several parts of the city.

4. The first time that the apostle uses the word church, is in his preface to the former epistle to the Corinthians: "Paul called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ, unto the church of God which is at Corinth:" the meaning of which expression is fixed by the following words: "To them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus; with all that, in every place," (not Corinth only; so it was a kind of circular letter,) "call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both yours and ours." In the inscription of his second letter to the Corinthians, he speaks still more explicitly: "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints that are in all Achaia." Here he plainly includes all the churches, or Christian congregations, which were in the whole province.

5. He frequently uses the word in the plural number. So, Gal. i, 2, "Paul an apostle,—unto the churches of Galatia;" that is, the Christian congregations dispersed throughout that country. In all these places, (and abundantly more might be cited,) the word church or churches means, not the buildings where the Christians assembled, (as it frequently does in the English tongue,) but the people that used to assemble there; one or more Christian congregations. But sometimes the word church is taken, in Scripture, in a still more extensive meaning; as including all the Christian congregations that are upon the face of the earth. And in this sense we understand it in our liturgy, when we say, "Let us pray for the whole state of Christ's church militant here on earth." In this sense it is unquestionably taken by St. Paul, in his exhortation to the elders of Ephesus, Acts xx, 28, "Take heed to the church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood." The church here, undoubtedly, means the catholic or universal church; that is, all the Christians under heaven.

6. Who those are that are properly "the church of God," the apostle shows at large; and that in the clearest and most decisive manner, in the passage above cited: wherein he likewise instructs all the members of the church, how to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called."

7. Let us consider, first, who are properly the church of God? What is the true meaning of that term? "The church at Ephesus," as the apostle himself explains it, means, "the saints," the holy persons, "that are in Ephesus;" and there assemble themselves together to worship God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ: whether they did this in one, or (as we may probably suppose) in several places. But it

is the church in general, the catholic or universal church, which the apostle here considers as one body: comprehending not only the Christians in the house of Philemon, or any one family; not only the Christians of one congregation, of one city, of one province, or nation; but all the persons upon the face of the earth, who answer the character here given. The several particulars contained therein, we may now more distinctly consider.

8. "There is one Spirit" who animates all these; all the living members of the church of God. Some understand hereby the Holy Spirit himself; the Fountain of all spiritual life: and it is certain, "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Others understand it of those spiritual gifts and holy dispositions which are afterwards mentioned.

9. "There is," in all those that have received this Spirit, "one hope;" a hope full of immortality. They know to die is not to be lost: their prospect extends beyond the grave. They can cheerfully say, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

10. "There is one Lord," who has now dominion over them; who has set up his kingdom in their hearts, and reigns over all those that are partakers of this hope. To obey him, to run the way of his commandments, is their glory and joy. And while they are doing this with a willing mind, they, as it were, "sit in heavenly places with Christ Jesus."

11. "There is one faith;" which is the free gift of God, and is the ground of their hope. This is not barely the faith of a heathen: namely, a belief that "there is a God," and that he is gracious and just, and, consequently, "a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Neither is it barely the faith of a devil: though this goes much farther than the former: for the devil believes, and cannot but believe, all that is written both in the Old and New Testament to be true. But it is the faith of St. Thomas, teaching him to say with holy boldness; "My Lord, and my God." It is the faith which enables every true Christian believer to testify with St. Paul, "The life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

12. "There is one baptism;" which is the outward sign our one Lord has been pleased to appoint, of all that inward and spiritual grace, which he is continually bestowing upon his church. It is, likewise, a precious means, whereby this faith and hope are given to those that diligently seek him. Some, indeed, have been inclined to interpret this in a figurative sense; as if it referred to that baptism of the Holy Ghost, which the apostles received at the day of pentecost, and which, in a lower degree, is given to all believers: but it is a stated rule in interpreting Scripture, never to depart from the plain literal sense, unless it implies an absurdity. And beside, if we thus understood it, it would be a needless repetition, as being included in, "there is one Spirit."

13. "There is one God, and Father of all;" that have the Spirit of adoption, which "crieth in their hearts, Abba, Father;" which "witnesseth" continually "with their spirits," that they are the children of God: "who is above all,"—the Most High, the Creator, the Sustainer,

the Governor of the whole universe: "And through all,"—pervading all space; filling heaven and earth:

Totam
Mens agitans molem, et magno se corpore miscens:—

"And in you all,"—in a peculiar manner living in you, that are one body, by one Spirit:

Making your souls his loved abode,
The temples of indwelling God.

14. Here, then, is a clear unexceptionable answer to that question, What is the church? The catholic or universal church, is, all the persons in the universe, whom God hath so called out of the world, as to entitle them to the preceding character; as to be "one body," united by "one Spirit;" having "one faith, one hope, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in them all."

15. That part of this great body, of the universal church, which inhabits any one kingdom or nation, we may properly term a national church; as, the church of France, the church of England, the church of Scotland. A smaller part of the universal church, are the Christians that inhabit one city or town; as the church of Ephesus, and the rest of the seven churches mentioned in the Revelation. Two or three Christian believers united together, are a church in the narrowest sense of the word. Such was the church in the house of Philemon, and that in the house of Nymphas, mentioned Col. iv, 15. A particular church may, therefore, consist of any number of members, whether two or three, or two or three millions. But still, whether they be larger or smaller, the same idea is to be preserved. They are one body; and have one Spirit, one Lord, one hope, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all.

16. This account is exactly agreeable to the nineteenth article of our church, the church of England: (only the article includes a little more than the apostle has expressed.)

"*Of the Church.*

"The visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments be duly administered."

It may be observed, that at the same time our thirty-nine articles were compiled and published, a Latin translation of them was published by the same authority. In this the words were "Cœtus credentium;' *a congregation of believers;* plainly showing that by *faithful men*, the compilers meant, men endued with *living faith.* This brings the article to a still nearer agreement to the account given by the apostle.

But it may be doubted, whether the article speaks of a particular church, or of the church universal? The title, "Of the church," seems to have reference to the catholic church; but the second clause of the article mentions the particular churches of Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome. Perhaps it was intended to take in both: so to define the universal church, as to keep in view the several particular churches of which it is composed.

17. These things being considered, it is easy to answer that question, "What is the church of England?" It is that part, those members of the universal church, who are inhabitants of England. The church of England is that body of men in England, in whom "there

is one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith;" which have "one baptism," and "one God and Father of all." This and this alone is the church of England, according to the doctrine of the apostle.

18. But the definition of a church, laid down in the article, includes, not only this, but much more, by that remarkable addition: "In which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments be duly administered." According to this definition, those congregations in which the pure word of God (a strong expression) is not preached are no parts either of the church of England, or the church catholic: as neither are those in which the sacraments are not duly administered.

19. I will not undertake to defend the accuracy of this definition. I dare not exclude from the church catholic, all those congregations in which any unscriptural doctrines, which cannot be affirmed to be "the pure word of God," are sometimes, yea, frequently preached; neither all those congregations in which the sacraments are not "duly administered." Certainly if these things are so, the church of Rome is not so much as a part of the catholic church: seeing therein neither is "the pure word of God" preached, nor the sacraments "duly administered." Whoever they are that have "one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one God and Father of all;" I can easily bear with their holding wrong opinions, yea, and superstitious modes of worship: nor would I, on these accounts, scruple still to include them within the pale of the catholic church: neither would I have any objection to receive them, if they desired it, as members of the church of England.

II. 20. We proceed now to the second point. What is it to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called?"

It should always be remembered, that the word *walk*, in the language of the apostle, is of a very extensive signification. It includes all our inward and outward motions; all our thoughts, and words, and actions. It takes in not only every thing we do, but every thing we either speak or think. It is, therefore, no small thing "to walk," in this sense of the word, "worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called:" to think, speak, and act, in every instance, in a manner worthy of our Christian calling.

21. We are called to walk, first, "with all lowliness:" to have the mind in us which was also in Christ Jesus; not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think; to be little, and poor, and mean, and vile in our own eyes: to know ourselves as also we are known by him to whom all hearts are open: to be deeply sensible of our own unworthiness, of the universal depravity of our nature; (in which dwelleth no good thing;) prone to all evil, averse to all good; insomuch that we are, not only sick, but dead in trespasses and sins; till God breathes upon the dry bones, and creates life by the fruit of his lips. And suppose this is done, suppose he has now quickened us, infusing life into our dead souls; yet how much of the carnal mind remains! How prone is our heart still to depart from the living God! What a tendency to sin remains in our heart, although we know our past sins are forgiven! And how much sin, in spite of all our endeavours, cleaves both to our words and actions! Who can be duly sensible, how much remains in him of his natural enmity to God? Or how far he is still alienated from God, by the ignorance that is in him?

22. Yea, suppose God has now thoroughly cleansed our heart, and scattered the last remains of sin; yet how can we be sensible enough of our own helplessness; our utter inability to all good, unless we are every hour, yea, every moment, endued with power from on high? Who is able to think one good thought, or to form one good desire, unless by that almighty power which worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure? We have need, even in this state of grace, to be thoroughly and continually penetrated with a sense of this, otherwise we shall be in perpetual danger of robbing God of his honour, by glorying in something we have received, as though we had not received it.

23. When our inmost soul is thoroughly tinctured therewith, it remains, that we "be clothed with humility." The word used by St. Peter seems to imply, that we be covered with it as with a surtout: that we be all humility, both within and without; tincturing all we think, speak, and do. Let all our actions spring from this fountain: let all our words breathe this spirit, that all men may know we have been with Jesus, and have learned of him to be lowly in heart.

24. And being taught of him who was meek as well as lowly in heart, we shall then be enabled to "walk with all meekness;" being taught of him who teacheth as never man taught, to be meek as well as lowly in heart. This implies, not only a power over anger, but over all violent and turbulent passions. It implies the having all our passions in due proportion; none of them either too strong or too weak; but all duly balanced with each other; all subordinate to reason; and reason directed by the Spirit of God. Let this equanimity govern your whole souls; that your thoughts may all flow in an even stream, and the uniform tenor of your words and actions be suitable thereto. In this "patience" you will then "possess your souls;" which are not our own, while we are tossed by unruly passions. And by this all men may know, that we are indeed followers of the meek and lowly Jesus.

25. Walk with all "long suffering." This is nearly related to meekness, but implies something more. It carries on the victory already gained over all your turbulent passions; notwithstanding all the powers of darkness; all the assaults of evil men or evil spirits. It is patiently triumphant over all opposition, and unmoved though all the waves and storms thereof go over you. Though provoked ever so often, it is still the same, quiet and unshaken; never being "overcome of evil," but overcoming evil with good.

26. The "forbearing one another in love," seems to mean, not only the not resenting any thing, and the not avenging yourselves; not only the not injuring, hurting, or grieving each other, either by word or deed; but also the bearing one another's burdens; yea, and lessening them by every means in our power. It implies the sympathizing with them in their sorrows, afflictions, and infirmities; the bearing them up, when, without our help, they would be liable to sink under their burdens; the endeavouring to lift their sinking heads, and to strengthen their feeble knees.

27. Lastly: the true members of the church of Christ, "endeavour," with all possible diligence, with all care and pains, with unwearied patience, (and all will be little enough,) to "keep the unity of the

Spirit in the bond of peace:" to preserve inviolate the same spirit of lowliness and meekness, of long suffering, mutual forbearance, and love; and all these cemented and knit together by that sacred tie,—the peace of God filling the heart. Thus only can we be, and continue, living members of that church which is the body of Christ.

28. Does it not clearly appear from this whole account, why, in the ancient creed, commonly called the apostles', we term it the universal or catholic church? "The holy catholic church?" How many wonderful reasons have been found out for giving it this appellation? One learned man informs us, "The church is called holy, because Christ the head of it is holy." Another eminent author affirms, 'It is so called, because all its ordinances are designed to promote holiness." And yet another, "Because our Lord *intended* that all the members of the church should be holy." Nay, the shortest and the plainest reason that can be given, and the only true one, is:—The church is called *holy*, because it *is* holy: because every member thereof is holy; though in different degrees; as he that called them is holy. How clear is this! If the church, as to the very essence of it, is a body of believers, no man, that is not a Christian believer, can be a member of it. If this whole body be animated by one Spirit, and endued with one faith, and one hope of their calling; then he who has not that Spirit, and faith, and hope, is no member of this body. It follows, that not only no common swearer, no sabbath breaker, no drunkard, no whoremonger, no thief, no liar, none that lives in any outward sin; but none that is under the power of anger, or pride; no lover of the world; in a word, none that is dead to God, can be a member of his church.

29. Can any thing then be more absurd than for men to cry out, *The church! The church!* And to pretend to be very zealous for it, and violent defenders of it; while they themselves have neither part nor lot therein; nor indeed know what the church is! And yet the hand of God is in this very thing! Even in this his wonderful wisdom appears, directing their mistake to his own glory, and causing "the earth to help the woman." Imagining that they are members of it themselves, the men of the world frequently defend the church: otherwise the wolves that surround the little flock on every side, would in a short time tear them in pieces. And for this very reason, it is not wise to provoke them more than is unavoidable. Even on this ground, let us, if it be possible, as much as lieth in us, "live peaceably with all men." Especially as we know not how soon God may call them too out of the kingdom of Satan, into the kingdom of his dear Son.

30. In the mean time let all those who are real members of the church, see that they walk holy and unblamable in all things. "Ye are the light of the world!" Ye are "a city set upon a hill," and "cannot be hid." Oh "let your light shine before men!" Show them your faith by your works. Let them see by the whole tenor of your conversation, that your hope is all laid up above! Let all your words and actions evidence the Spirit whereby you are animated! Above all things, let your love abound. Let it extend to every child of man: let it overflow to every child of God. By this let all men know whose disciples ye are, because you "love one another."

SERMON LXXX.—*On Schism.*

"That there might be no schism in the body," 1 Cor. xii, 25.

1. IF there be any word in the English tongue as ambiguous and indeterminate in its meaning as the word church, it is one that is nearly allied to it; the word schism. It has been the subject of innumerable disputes, for several hundred years; and almost innumerable books have been written concerning it in every part of the Christian world. A very large share of these have been published in our country; particularly during the last century, and the beginning of the present. And persons of the strongest understanding, and the most consummate learning, have exhausted all their strength upon the question, both in conversation and writing. This has appeared to be more necessary than ever, since the grand separation of the reformed from the Romish church. This is a charge which the members of that church never fail to bring against all that separate from her; and which, consequently, has employed the thoughts and pens of the most able disputants on both sides. And those of each side have generally, when they entered into the field, been secure of victory; supposing the strength of their arguments was so great, that it was impossible for reasonable men to resist them.

2. But it is observable, that exceeding little good has been done by all these controversies. Very few of the warmest and ablest disputants have been able to convince their opponents. After all that could be said, the Papists are Papists, and the Protestants are Protestants still. And the same success has attended those who have so vehemently disputed about separation from the church of England. Those who separated from her were eagerly charged with schism; they as eagerly denied the charge; and scarcely any were able to convince their opponents, either on one side or the other.

3. One great reason why this controversy has been so unprofitable; why so few of either side have been convinced; is this: they seldom agreed as to the meaning of the word, concerning which they disputed: and if they did not fix the meaning of this, if they did not define the term, before they began disputing about it, they might continue the dispute to their lives' end, without getting one step forward; without coming a jot nearer to each other than when they first set out.

4. Yet it must be a point of considerable importance, or St. Paul would not have spoken so seriously of it. It is, therefore, highly needful, that we should consider,

I. The nature, and,

II. The evil of it.

I. 1. It is the more needful to do this, because among the numberless books that have been written upon the subject, both by the Romanists and Protestants, it is difficult to find any that define it in a scriptural manner. The whole body of Roman Catholics define schism, a separation from the church of Rome; and almost all our own writers define it, a separation from the church of England. Thus both the one and the other set out wrong, and stumble at the very threshold. This will easily appear to any that calmly consider the several texts wherein

the word schism occurs. From the whole tenor of which it is manifest, that it is not a separation *from* any church; (whether general or particular, whether the Catholic, or any national church;) but a separation *in* a church.

2. Let us begin with the first verse, wherein St. Paul makes use of the word. It is the tenth verse of the first chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians. The words are; "I beseech you, brethren, by the name of the Lord Jesus, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no schisms [the original word is σχισματα] among you." Can any thing be more plain than that the schisms here spoken of, were not separations *from*, but divisions *in* the church of Corinth? Accordingly it follows; "But that ye be perfectly united together, in the same mind and in the same judgment." You see here, that a union in mind and judgment was the direct opposite to the Corinthian schism. This, consequently, was not a separation from the church or Christian society at Corinth; but a separation in the church: a disunion in mind and judgment, (perhaps also in affection,) among those who, notwithstanding this, continued outwardly united as before.

3. Of what nature this schism at Corinth was, is still more clearly determined, (if any thing can be more clear,) by the words that immediately follow: "Now this I say,"—this is the schism of which I speak; you are divided into separate parties; some of you speaking in favour of one, some of another preacher;—"every one of you saith," verse 12, "I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas," [or Peter.] Who then does not see, that the schism for which the apostle here reproves the Corinthians is neither more nor less, than the splitting into several parties, as they gave the preference to one or another preacher? And this species of schism there will be occasion to guard against in every religious community.

4. The second place where the apostle uses this word, is in the eighteenth verse of the eleventh chapter of this epistle. "When ye come together in the church," the Christian congregation, "I hear that there are divisions [the original word here also is σχισματα, *schisms*] among you." But what were these schisms? The apostle immediately tells you, verse 20, "When you come together," professing your design is "to eat of the Lord's supper, every one of you taketh before another his own supper;" as if it were a common meal. What then was the schism? It seems, in doing this, they divided into little parties, which cherished anger and resentment, one against another, even at that solemn season.

5. May it not be observed, (to make a little digression here, for the sake of those who are troubled with needless scruples on this head,) that the sin which the apostle charges on the communicants at Corinth in this chapter, is usually quite misunderstood? It was precisely this, and nothing else; "The taking one before another his own supper;" and in such a shocking manner, that while "one was hungry, another was drunken." By doing this, he says, "ye eat and drink" (not *damnation;* a vile mistranslation of the word, but) *judgment*, temporal judgment, "to yourselves:" which sometimes shortened their lives. "For this cause"—for sinning in this vile manner—"many are sick and weak among you." Observe here two things: first, what was the sin of the Corinthians? Mark it well, and remember it. It was *taking one before*

another his own supper; so that while *one was hungry, another was drunken*. Secondly, what was the punishment? It was bodily weakness and sickness; which, without repentance, might end in death But what is this to *you?* You cannot commit *their* sin: therefore you cannot incur their punishment.

6. But to return. It deserves to be seriously remarked, that in this chapter, the apostle uses the word heresies, as exactly equivalent with the word schisms. "I hear," says he, verse 18, "that there are schisms among you, and I partly believe it:" he then adds, verse 19, "for there must be heresies" [another word for the same thing] "among you, that they which are approved among you may be made manifest." As if he had said; "The wisdom of God permits it so to be, for this end,—for the clear manifestation of those whose heart is right with him." This word, therefore, (*heresy*,) which has been so strangely distorted for many centuries, as if it meant erroneous opinions, opinions contrary to the faith delivered to the saints;—which has been made a pretence for destroying cities, depopulating countries, and shedding seas of innocent blood;—has not the least reference to opinions, whether right or wrong It simply means, wherever it occurs in Scripture, divisions, or parties, in a religious community.

7. The third, and the only remaining place in this epistle, wherein the apostle uses this word, is the twenty-fifth verse of the twelfth chapter; where, speaking of the church, (he seems to mean the church universal, the whole body of Christ,) he observes; "God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked, that there might be no schism in the body," verse 24, 25: he immediately fixes the meaning of his own words: "But that the members might have the same care one for another: and whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it." We may easily observe, that the word schism here, means the want of this tender care for each other. It undoubtedly means an alienation of affection in any of them towards their brethren; a division of heart, and parties springing therefrom, though they were still outwardly united together; though they still continued members of the same external society.

8. But there seems to be one considerable objection against the supposing heresy and schism to mean the same thing. It is said, St. Peter, in the second chapter of his second epistle, takes the word heresies in a quite different sense. His words are, verse 1, "There shall be among you false teachers, who will bring in damnable [or destructive] heresies; denying the Lord that bought them." It does by no means appear, that St. Peter here takes the word heresies in any other sense than St. Paul does. Even in this passage it does not appear to have any reference to opinions, good or bad. Rather it means, they will "bring in," or occasion, destructive parties or sects, (so it is rendered in the common French translation,) who "deny the Lord that bought them:" such sects now swarm throughout the Christian world.

9. I shall be thankful to any one who will point to me any other place in the inspired writings, where this word schism is to be found I remember only these three. And it is apparent to every impartial reader, that it does not, in any of these, mean a separation from any

church, or body of Christians, whether with or without cause. So that the immense pains which have been taken both by Papists and Protestants, in writing whole volumes against schism, as a separation, whether from the church of Rome, or from the church of England, exerting all their strength, and bringing all their learning, have been employed to mighty little purpose. They have been fighting with shadows of their own raising; violently combating a sin which had no existence, but in their own imagination; which is not once forbidden, no, nor once mentioned, either in the Old or New Testament.

10. "But is there no sin resembling what so many learned and pious writers have termed schism; and against which all the members of religious communities have need to be carefully guarded?" I do not doubt but there is; and I cannot tell, whether this too, may not, in a remote sense, be called schism: I mean, "a causeless separation from a body of living Christians." There is no absurdity in taking the word in this sense; though it be not strictly scriptural. And it is certain all the members of Christian communities should be carefully guarded against it. For how little a thing soever it may seem, and how innocent soever it may be accounted, schism, even in this sense, is both evil in itself, and productive of evil consequences.

11. It is evil in itself. To separate ourselves from a body of living Christians, with whom we were before united, is a grievous breach of the law of love. It is the nature of love to unite us together; and the greater the love, the stricter the union. And while this continues in its strength, nothing can divide those whom love has united. It is only when our love grows cold, that we can think of separating from our brethren. And this is certainly the case with any who willingly separate from their Christian brethren. The pretences for separation may be innumerable, but want of love is always the real cause; otherwise, they would still hold the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. It is therefore contrary to all those commands of God, wherein brotherly love is enjoined: to that of St. Paul; "Let brotherly love continue;"—to that of St. John; "My beloved children, love one another;"—and especially to that of our blessed Master: "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you." Yea, "by this," saith he, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another."

12. And as such a separation is evil in itself, being a breach of brotherly love, so it brings forth evil fruit; it is naturally productive of the most mischievous consequences. It opens a door to all unkind tempers, both in ourselves and others. It leads directly to a whole train of evil surmisings, to severe and uncharitable judging of each other. It gives occasion to offence, to anger and resentment, perhaps in ourselves as well as in our brethren; which, if not presently stopped, may issue in bitterness, malice, and settled hatred; creating a present hell wherever they are found, as a prelude to hell eternal.

13. But the ill consequences of even this species of schism do not terminate in the heart. Evil tempers cannot long remain within, before they are productive of outward fruit. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. As he whose heart is full of love, openeth his mouth with wisdom, and in his lips there is the law of kindness; so he whose heart is full of prejudice, anger, suspicion, or any unkind temper, will surely open his mouth in a manner corresponding with the dispo-

sition of his mind. And hence will arise, if not lying and slandering, (which yet will hardly be avoided,) bitter words, tale bearing, back biting, and evil speaking of every kind.

14. From evil words, from tale bearing, backbiting, and evil speaking, how many evil works will naturally flow! Anger, jealousy, envy, wrong tempers of every kind, do not vent themselves merely in words, but push men continually to all kind of ungodly and unrighteous actions. A plentiful harvest of all the works of darkness, may be expected to spring from this source; whereby, in the end, thousands of souls, and not a few of those who once walked in the light of God's countenance, may be turned from the way of peace, and finally drowned in everlasting perdition.

15. Well might our blessed Lord say, "Wo unto the world because of offences!" Yet "it must needs be, that offences will come:" yea, abundance of them will, of necessity, arise, when a breach of this sort is made in any religious community: while they that leave it endeavour to justify themselves, by censuring those they separate from; and these, on the other hand, retort the charge, and strive to lay the blame on them. But how mightily does all this altercation grieve the Holy Spirit of God! How does it hinder his mild and gentle operations in the souls both of one and the other! Heresies and schisms, (in the scriptural sense of those words,) will, sooner or later, be the consequence; parties will be formed, on one and the other side, whereby the love of many will wax cold. The hunger and thirst after righteousness, after either the favour or the full image of God, together with the longing desires, wherewith so many were filled, of promoting the work of God in the souls of their brethren, will grow languid; and, as offences increase, will gradually die away. And as the "fruit of the Spirit" withers away, "the works of the flesh" will again prevail; to the utter destruction, first of the power, and then of the very form, of religion. These consequences are not imaginary; are not built on mere conjectures, but on plain matter of fact. This has been the case again and again within these last thirty or forty years: these have been the fruits which we have seen over and over, to be consequent on such a separation.

16. And what a grievous stumbling block must these things be to those who are without; to those who are strangers to religion; who have neither the form nor the power of godliness! How will they triumph over these once eminent Christians! How boldly ask, "What are they better than us?" How will they harden their hearts more and more against the truth, and bless themselves in their wickedness? From which, possibly, the example of the Christians might have reclaimed them, had they continued unblamable in their behaviour. Such is the complicated mischief which persons separating from a Christian church or society do, not only to themselves, but to that whole society, and to the whole world in general.

17. But perhaps such persons will say, "We did not do this willingly; we were constrained to separate from that society, because we could not continue therein with a clear conscience; we could not continue without sin. I was not allowed to continue therein, without breaking a commandment of God." If this was the case, you could not be blamed for separating from that society. Suppose, for instance, you were a member of the church of Rome; and you could not remain therein, without

committing idolatry; without worshipping of idols, whether images, or saints and angels; then it would be your bounden duty to leave that community; totally to separate from it. Suppose you could not remain in the church of England, without doing something which the word of God forbids, or omitting something which the word of God positively commands; if this were the case, (but, blessed be God, it is not,) you ought to separate from the church of England. I will make the case my own: I am now, and have been from my youth, a member and a minister of the church of England. And I have no desire nor design to separate from it, till my soul separates from my body. Yet if I was not permitted to remain therein, without omitting what God requires me to do, it would then become meet, and right, and my bounden duty, to separate from it without delay. To be more particular: I know God has committed to me a dispensation of the gospel; yea, and my own salvation depends upon preaching it: "wo is me if I preach not the gospel." If then I could not remain in the church without omitting this; without desisting from preaching the gospel, I should be under a necessity of separating from it, or losing my own soul. In like manner, if I could not continue united to any smaller society, church, or body of Christians, without committing sin; without lying and hypocrisy; without preaching to others, doctrines which I did not myself believe; I should be under an absolute necessity of separating from that society. And in all these cases the sin of separation, with all the evils consequent upon it, would not lie upon me, but upon those who constrained me to make that separation, by requiring of me such terms of communion, as I could not in conscience comply with. But setting aside this case, suppose the church or society to which I am now united, does not require me to do any thing which the Scripture forbids, or to omit any thing which the Scripture enjoins, it is then my indispensable duty to continue therein. And if I separate from it, without any such necessity, I am justly chargeable (whether I foresaw them or not) with all the evils consequent upon that separation.

18. I have spoke the more explicitly upon this head, because it is so little understood; because so many of those who profess much religion, nay, and really enjoy a measure of it, have not the least conception of this matter, neither imagine such a separation to be any sin at all. They leave a Christian society with as much unconcern, as they go out of one room into another. They give occasion to all this complicated mischief, and wipe their mouth, and say they have done no evil! Whereas they are justly chargeable, before God and man, both with an action that is evil in itself, and with all the evil consequences which may be expected to follow; to themselves, to their brethren, and to the world.

19. I entreat you, therefore, my brethren, all that fear God, and have a desire to please him; all that wish to have a conscience void of offence, towards God and towards man; think not so slightly of this matter, but consider it calmly. Do not rashly tear asunder the sacred ties, which unite you to any Christian society. This indeed is not of so much consequence to *you* who are only a *nominal* Christian. For you are not now vitally united to any of the members of Christ. Though you are called a Christian, you are not really a member of any Christian church But if you are a living member, if you live the life that is hid with Christ in God, then take care how you rend the body of Christ, by separating

from your brethren. It is a thing evil in itself. It is a sore evil in its consequences. Oh have pity upon yourself! Have pity on your brethren! Have pity even upon the world of the ungodly! Do not lay more stumbling blocks in the way of these for whom Christ died.

20. But if you are afraid, and that not without reason, of schism, improperly so called; how much more afraid will you be, if your conscience is tender, of schism in the proper scriptural sense! Oh beware, I will not say of *forming*, but of *countenancing*, or *abetting* any *parties* in a Christian society! Never encourage, much less cause, either by word or action, any division therein. In the nature of things, "there must be heresies [divisions] among you;" but keep thyself pure. Leave off contention before it be meddled with: shun the very beginning of strife. Meddle not with them that are given to dispute, with them that love contention. I never knew that remark to fail; "He that loves to dispute, does not love God." Follow peace with all men, without which you cannot effectually follow holiness. Not only "seek peace," but "ensue it:" if it seem to flee from you, pursue it nevertheless. "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

21. Happy is he that attains the character of a peace maker in the church of God. Why should not you labour after this? Be not content, not to stir up strife; but do all that in you lies, to prevent or quench the very first spark of it. Indeed it is far easier to prevent the flame from breaking out, than to quench it afterwards. However, be not afraid to attempt even this: the God of peace is on your side. He will give you acceptable words, and will send them to the heart of the hearers. *Noli diffidere: noli discedere*, says a pious man, *fac quod in te est; et Deus aderit bonæ tuæ voluntati:* "do not distrust him that has all power; that has the hearts of all men in his hand. Do what in thee lies, and God will be present, and bring thy good desires to good effect." Never be weary of well doing: in due time thou shalt reap if thou faint not.

SERMON LXXXI.—*On Perfection.*

"Let us go on unto perfection," Heb. vi, 1.

THE whole sentence runs thus: "Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection: not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God;" which he had just before termed, "the first principles of the oracles of God," and "meat fit for babes;" for such as have just tasted that the Lord is gracious.

That the doing of this is a point of the utmost importance, the apostle intimates in the next words: "This will we do, if God permit. For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, and have fallen away, to renew them again to repentance." As if he had said, If we do not "go on to perfection," we are in the utmost danger of "falling away." And if we do fall away, it is "impossible [that is exceeding hard] to renew us again to repentance."

In order to make this very important scripture as easy to be understood as possible, I shall endeavour,

I. To show what perfection is:

II. To answer some objections to it: and

III. To expostulate a little with the opposers of it.

I. I will endeavour to show, what perfection is.

1. And first, I do not conceive the perfection here spoken of, to be the perfection of angels. As those glorious beings never "left their first estate;" never declined from their original perfection; all their native faculties are unimpaired: their understanding, in particular, is still a lamp of light; their apprehension of all things clear and distinct; and their judgment always true. Hence, though their knowledge is limited; (for they are creatures;) though they are ignorant of innumerable things; yet they are not liable to mistake: their knowledge is perfect in its kind. And as their affections are all constantly guided by their unerring understanding, so that all their actions are suitable thereto; so they do, every moment, not their own will, but the good and acceptable will of God. Therefore it is not possible for man, whose understanding is darkened, to whom mistake is as natural as ignorance; who cannot think at all, but by the mediation of organs which are weakened and depraved, like the other parts of his corruptible body; it is not possible, I say, for man always to think right, to apprehend things distinctly, and to judge truly of them. In consequence hereof his affections, depending on his understanding, are variously disordered. And his words and actions are influenced, more or less, by the disorder both of his understanding and affections. It follows, that no man, while in the body, can possibly attain to angelic perfection.

2. Neither can any man, while he is in a corruptible body, attain to Adamic perfection. Adam, before his fall, was undoubtedly as pure, as free from sin, as even the holy angels. In like manner, his understanding was as clear as theirs, and his affections as regular. In virtue of this, as he always judged right, so he was able always to speak and act right. But since man rebelled against God, the case is widely different with him. He is no longer able to avoid falling into innumerable mistakes; consequently he cannot always avoid wrong affections; neither can he always think, speak, and act right. Therefore man, in his present state, can no more attain Adamic than angelic perfection.

3. The highest perfection which man can attain, while the soul dwells in the body, does not exclude ignorance, and error, and a thousand other infirmities. Now from wrong judgments, wrong words and actions will often necessarily flow: and, in some cases, wrong affections also may spring from the same source. I may judge wrong of you; I may think more or less highly of you than I ought to think; and this mistake in my judgment, may not only occasion something wrong in my behaviour, but it may have a still deeper effect; it may occasion something wrong in my affection. From a wrong apprehension, I may love and esteem you either more or less than I ought. Nor can I be freed from a liableness to such a mistake, while I remain in a corruptible body. A thousand infirmities, in consequence of this, will attend my spirit, till it returns to God who gave it. And, in numberless instances, it comes short of doing the will of God, as Adam did in paradise. Hence the best of men may say from the heart;

"Every moment, Lord, I need
The merit of thy death."

for innumerable violations of the Adamic as well as the angelic law. It is well, therefore, for us, that we are not now under these, but under the law of love "Love is [now] the fulfilling of the law," which is given to fallen man. This is now, with respect to us, "the perfect law." But even against this, through the present weakness of our understanding, we are continually liable to transgress. Therefore every man living needs the blood of atonement, or he could not stand before God.

4. What is then the perfection of which man is capable, while he dwells in a corruptible body? It is the complying with that kind command; "My son, give me thy heart." It is the "loving the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind." This is the sum of Christian perfection: it is all comprised in that one word, love. The first branch of it is the love of God: and as he that loves God loves his brother also, it is inseparably connected with the second; "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself:" Thou shalt love every man as thy own soul, as Christ loved us. "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets:" these contain the whole of Christian perfection

5. Another view of this is given us, in those words of the great apostle; "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." For although this immediately and directly refers to the humility of our Lord, yet it may be taken in a far more extensive sense, so as to include the whole disposition of his mind, all his affections, all his tempers, both towards God and man. Now it is certain that as there was no evil affection in him, so no good affection or temper was wanting. So that "whatsoever things are holy, whatsoever things are lovely," are all included in "the mind that was in Christ Jesus."

6. St. Paul, when writing to the Galatians, places perfection in yet another view. It is the one undivided *fruit of the Spirit*, which he describes thus: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity," (so the word should be translated here,) "meekness, temperance." What a glorious constellation of graces is here! Now suppose all these things to be knit together in one, to be united together in the soul of a believer, this is Christian perfection.

7. Again: He writes to the Christians at Ephesus, of "putting on the new man, which is created after God in righteousness and true holiness:" And to the Colossians, of "the new man renewed after the image of him that created him:" plainly referring to the words in Genesis, chap. i, 27, "So God created man in his own image." Now the moral image of God consists (as the apostle observes) "in righteousness and true holiness." By sin this is totally destroyed. And we never can recover it, till we are "created anew in Christ Jesus." And this is perfection.

8. St. Peter expresses it in a still different manner, though to the same effect. "As he that hath called you is holy, so be ye holy, in all manner of conversation," 1 Peter i, 15. According to this apostle then, perfection is another name for universal holiness: inward and outward righteousness: holiness of life, arising from holiness of heart.

9. If any expressions can be stronger than these, they are those of St. Paul to the Thessalonians: 1 Epistle v, 23, "The God of peace

himself sanctify you wholly; and may the whole of you, the spirit, the soul, and the body, [this is the literal translation,] be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

10. We cannot show this sanctification in a more excellent way, than by complying with that exhortation of the apostle; "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies," [yourselves, your souls and bodies; a part put for the whole, by a common figure of speech,] "a living sacrifice unto God;" to whom ye were consecrated many years ago in baptism. When what was then devoted, is actually presented to God, then is the man of God perfect.

11. To the same effect St. Peter says, 1 Epistle ii, 5, "Ye are a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God, through Jesus Christ." But what sacrifices shall we offer now, seeing the Jewish dispensation is at an end? If you have truly presented yourselves to God, you offer up to him continually all your thoughts, and words, and actions, through the Son of his love, as a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.

12. Thus you experience, that he whose name is called JESUS, does not bear that name in vain: that he does, in fact, "save his people from their sins;" the root, as well as the branches. And this salvation from sin, from all sin, is another description of perfection, though indeed it expresses only the least, the lowest branch of it, only the negative part of the great salvation.

II. I proposed, in the second place, to answer some objections to this scriptural account of perfection.

1. One common objection to it is, that there is no promise of it in the word of God. If this were so, we must give it up; we should have no foundation to build upon: for the promises of God are the only sure foundation of our hope. But surely there is a very clear and full promise, that we shall all love the Lord our God with all our hearts. So we read, Deut. xxx, 6, "Then will I circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul." Equally express is the word of our Lord, which is no less a promise, though in the form of a command: Matt. xxii, 37, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." No words can be more strong than these; no promise can be more express. In like manner, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," is as express a promise as a command.

2. And, indeed, that general and unlimited promise, which runs through the whole gospel dispensation; "I will put my laws in their minds, and write them in their hearts;" turns all the commands into promises; and consequently that among the rest: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." The command here is equivalent to a promise, and gives us full reason to expect, that he will work in us what he requires of us.

3. With regard to the fruit of the Spirit, the apostle in affirming, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, temperance," does, in effect, affirm, that the Holy Spirit actually works love, and these other tempers, in those that are led by him. So that here also, we have firm ground to tread upon: this scripture likewise being equivalent to a promise, and

assuring us, that all these shall be wrought in us, provided we are led by the Spirit.

4. And when the apostle says to the Ephesians, chap. iv, 21–24, "Ye have been taught, as the truth is in Jesus," to be "renewed in the spirit of your mind, and to put on the new man, which is created after God;" that is, after the image of God, "in righteousness and true holiness;" he leaves us no room to doubt, but God will thus "renew us in the spirit of our mind" and "create us anew" in the image of God, wherein we were at first created: otherwise it could not be said, that this is "the truth as it is in Jesus."

5. The command of God given by St. Peter; "Be ye holy, as he that hath called you is holy, in all manner of conversation," implies a promise that we shall be thus holy, if we are not wanting to ourselves. Nothing can be wanting on God's part: as he has called us to holiness, he is undoubtedly willing, as well as able, to work this holiness in us. For he cannot mock his helpless creatures, calling us to receive what he never intends to give. That he does call us thereto is undeniable; therefore, he will give it, if we are not disobedient to the heavenly calling.

6. The prayer of St. Paul for the Thessalonians, that God would "sanctify them throughout," and "that the whole of them, the spirit, the soul, and the body, might be preserved blameless," will undoubtedly be heard in behalf of all the children of God, as well as of those at Thessalonica. Hereby, therefore, all Christians are encouraged to expect the same blessing from "the God of peace," namely, that they also shall be "sanctified throughout, in spirit, soul, and body;" and that "the whole of them shall be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

7. But the great question is, whether there is any promise in Scripture, that we shall be *saved from sin?* Undoubtedly there is. Such is that promise, Psalm cxxx, 8, "He shall redeem Israel from all his sins;" exactly answerable to those words of the angel; "He shall save his people from their sins." And surely "he is able to save unto the uttermost, them that come unto God through him." Such is that glorious promise given through the prophet Ezekiel: chap. xxxvi, 25–27, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." Such (to mention no more) is that pronounced by Zechariah, Luke i, 73–75, "The oath which he sware to our father Abraham, that he would grant unto us, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, [and such doubtless, are all our sins,] to serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life." The last part of this promise is peculiarly worthy of our observation. Lest any should say, "True, we shall be saved from our sins when we die;" that clause is remarkably added, as if on purpose to obviate this pretence, *all the days of our life.* With what modesty then can any one affirm, "that none shall enjoy this liberty *till death?*

8. "But," say some, "this cannot be the meaning of the words; for the thing is impossible." It is impossible to men: but the things impossible with men, are possible with God. "Nay, but this is impossible in its own nature: for it implies a contradiction, that a man should be saved from all sin, while he is in a sinful body."

There is a great deal of force in this objection. And perhaps we allow most of what you contend for. We have already allowed, that while we are in the body, we cannot be wholly free from mistake. Notwithstanding all our care, we shall still be liable to judge wrong in many instances. And a mistake in judgment will very frequently occasion a mistake in practice. Nay, a wrong judgment may occasion something in the temper or passions, which is not strictly right. It may occasion needless fear, or ill-grounded hope; unreasonable love, or unreasonable aversion. But all this is no way inconsistent with the perfection above described.

9. You say, "Yes, it is inconsistent with the last article: it cannot consist with salvation from sin." I answer, it will perfectly well consist with salvation from sin, according to that definition of sin, (which I apprehend to be the scriptural definition of it,) *a voluntary transgression of a known law.* "Nay, but all transgressions of the law of God, whether voluntary or involuntary, are sin: for St. John says, All *sin is a transgression of the law.*" True, but he does not say, *All transgression of the law is sin.* This I deny: let him prove it that can.

To say the truth, this is a mere strife of words. You say "None is saved from sin in *your* sense of the word;" but I do not admit of that sense, because the word is never so taken in Scripture. And you cannot destroy the possibility of being saved from sin, in *my* sense of the word. And this is the sense wherein the word sin is over and over taken in Scripture.

"But surely we cannot be saved from sin, while we dwell in a *sinful body.*" A *sinful body?* I pray observe, how deeply ambiguous, how equivocal this expression is! But there is no authority for it in Scripture: the word, *sinful body*, is never found there. And as it is totally unscriptural, so it is palpably absurd. For no *body*, or matter of any kind, can be *sinful:* spirits alone are capable of sin. Pray in what part of the body should sin lodge? It cannot lodge in the skin, nor in the muscles, or nerves, or veins, or arteries; it cannot be in the bones, any more than in the hair or nails. Only the soul can be the seat of sin.

10. "But does not St. Paul himself say, 'They that are in the flesh cannot please God?'" I am afraid the sound of these words has deceived many unwary souls; who have been told those words, *they that are in the flesh*, mean the same as they that are in the body. No; nothing less. *The flesh*, in this text, no more means the body than it does the soul. Abel, Enoch, Abraham; yea, all that cloud of witnesses recited by St. Paul in the eleventh of the Hebrews; did actually please God, while they were in the body, as he himself testifies. The expression, therefore, here means neither more nor less, than they that are unbelievers; they that are in their natural state; they that are without God in the world.

11. But let us attend to the reason of the thing. Why cannot the Almighty sanctify the soul while it is in the body? Cannot he sanctify *you* while you are in this house, as well as in the open air? Can the

walls of brick or stone hinder him? No more can these walls of flesh and blood hinder him a moment from sanctifying you throughout. He can just as easily save you from all sin in the body as out of the body.

"But has he promised thus to save us from sin while we are in the body?" Undoubtedly he has: for a promise is implied in every commandment of God: consequently in that, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." For this and every other commandment is given, not to the dead, but to the living. It is expressed in the words above recited, That we should "walk in holiness before him all the days of our life."

I have dwelt the longer on this, because it is the grand argument of those that oppose salvation from sin; and also, because it has not been so frequently and so fully answered; whereas the arguments taken from Scripture have been answered a hundred times over.

12. But a still more plausible objection remains, taken from experience: which is, That "there are no living witnesses of this salvation from sin." In answer to this, I allow,

(1.) That there are not many. Even in this sense, there are *not many fathers*. Such is our hardness of heart; such our slowness to believe what both the prophets and apostles have spoke; that there are few, exceeding few true witnesses of the great salvation.

(2.) I allow, That there are false witnesses, who either deceive their own souls, and speak of the things they know not; or "speak lies in hypocrisy." And I have frequently wondered, that we have not more of both sorts. It is nothing strange, that men of warm imaginations should deceive themselves in this matter. Many do the same with regard to justification: they imagine they are justified, and are not. But though many imagine it falsely, yet there are some that are truly justified. And thus though many imagine they are sanctified, and are not, yet there are some that are really sanctified.

(3.) I allow, That some who once enjoyed full salvation, have now totally lost it. They once walked in glorious liberty, giving God their whole heart, "rejoicing evermore, praying without ceasing, and in every thing giving thanks." But it is past. They now are shorn of their strength, and become like other men. Yet, perhaps, they do not give up their confidence: they still have a sense of his pardoning love. But even this is frequently assaulted by doubts and fears, so that they hold it with a trembling hand.

13. "Nay, this," say some pious and sensible men, "is the very thing which we contend for. We grant, it may please God, to make some of his children, for a time, unspeakably holy and happy. We will not deny, that they may enjoy all the holiness and happiness which you speak of But it is only *for a time:* God never designed, that it should continue to their lives' end. Consequently, sin is only suspended: it is not destroyed."

This you affirm. But it is a thing of so deep importance, that it cannot be allowed without clear and cogent proof. And where is the proof? We know that, in general, "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." He does not repent of any gifts which he hath bestowed upon the children of men. And how does the contrary appear, with regard to this particular gift of God? Why should we imagine, that he will make an exception, with respect to the most pre-

cious of all his gifts on this side heaven? Is he not as able to give it us always, as to give it once? As able to give it for fifty years, as for one day? And how can it be proved, that he is not willing to continue this his loving kindness? How is this supposition, that he is not willing, consistent with the positive assertion of the apostle? who, after exhorting the Christians at Thessalonica, and in them all Christians in all ages, to "rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in every thing give thanks,"—immediately adds, (as if on purpose to answer those, who denied, not the *power*, but the *will* of God to work in them,) "For this is the will of God concerning you in Christ Jesus." Nay, and it is remarkable, that after he had delivered that glorious promise, (such it properly is,) in the twenty-third verse, "The very God of peace shall sanctify you wholly: and the whole of you," (so it is in the original,) "the spirit, the soul, and the body, shall be preserved blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ;" he adds again, "Faithful is he that hath called you, who also will do it." He *will* not only sanctify you wholly, but will preserve you in that state, until he comes to receive you unto himself.

14. Agreeably to this is the plain matter of fact. Several persons have enjoyed this blessing, without any interruption, for many years Several enjoy it at this day. And not a few have enjoyed it unto their death, as they have declared with their latest breath; calmly witnessing that God had saved them from all sin, till their spirit returned to God.

15. As to the whole of the objections taken from experience, I desire it may be observed farther, either the persons objected to, have attained Christian perfection, or they have not. If they have not, whatever objections are brought against them, strike wide of the mark. For they are not the persons we are talking of: therefore, whatever they are or do, is beside the question. But if they have attained it, if they answer the description given, under the nine preceding articles, no reasonable objection can lie against them. They are superior to all censure. And "every tongue that riseth up against them will they utterly condemn."

16. "But I never saw one," (continues the objector,) "that answered my idea of perfection." It may be so. And it is probable (as I observed elsewhere) you never will. For your idea includes abundantly too much: even freedom from those infirmities, which are not separable from a spirit that is connected with flesh and blood. But if you keep to the account that is given above, and allow for the weakness of human understanding, you may see, at this day, undeniable instances of genuine scriptural perfection.

III. 1. It only remains, in the third place, to expostulate a little with the opposers of this perfection.

Now permit me to ask, Why are you so angry with those who profess to have attained this? And so mad (I cannot give it any softer title) against Christian perfection?—Against the most glorious gift which God ever gave to the children of men upon earth? View it in every one of the preceding points of light, and see what it contains that is either odious or terrible: that is calculated to excite either hatred or fear in any reasonable creature.

What rational objection can you have, to the loving the Lord your God with all your heart? Why should you be afraid of it? Would it

do you any hurt? Would it lessen your happiness, either in this world, or the world to come? And why should you be unwilling that others should give him their whole heart? Or that they should love their neighbours as themselves?—Yea, "As Christ hath loved us?" Is this detestable? Is it the proper object of hatred? Or is it the most amiable thing under the sun? Is it proper to move terror? Is it not rather desirable in the highest degree?

2. Why are you so averse to having in you the whole "mind which was in Christ Jesus?" All the affections, all the tempers and dispositions, which were in him, while he dwelt among men? Why should you be afraid of this? Would it be any worse for you, were God to work in you this very hour, all the mind that was in him? If not, why should you hinder others from seeking this blessing? Or be displeased at those who think they have attained it? Is any thing more lovely? Any thing more to be desired by every child of man?

3. Why are you averse to having the whole "fruit of the Spirit?" "love, joy, peace, long suffering, meekness, gentleness, fidelity, goodness, temperance?" Why should you be afraid of having all these planted in your inmost soul? As "against these there is no law," so there cannot be any reasonable objection. Surely nothing is more desirable, than that all these tempers should take deep root in your heart: nay, in the hearts of all that name the name of Christ: yea, of all the inhabitants of the earth.

4. What reason have you to be afraid of, or to entertain any aversion to, the being "renewed in the [whole] image of him that created you?" Is not this more desirable than any thing under heaven? Is it not consummately amiable? What can you wish for in comparison of this, either for your own soul, or for those for whom you entertain the strongest and tenderest affection? And when you enjoy this, what remains but to be "changed from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord?"

5. Why should you be averse to universal holiness? The same thing under another name. Why should you entertain any prejudice against this, or look upon it with apprehension? Whether you understand by that term, the being inwardly conformed to the whole image and will of God; or an outward behaviour, in every point suitable to that conformity. Can you conceive any thing more amiable than this? Any thing more desirable? Set prejudice aside, and surely you will desire to see it diffused over all the earth.

6. Is perfection, (to vary the expression,) the being "sanctified throughout, in spirit, soul, and body?" What lover of God and man can be averse to this, or entertain frightful apprehensions of it? Is it not, in your best moments, your desire to be all of a piece?—All consistent with yourself?—All faith, all meekness, all love?—And suppose you were once possessed of this glorious liberty, would not you wish to continue therein? To be preserved "blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ?"

7. For what cause should you that are children of God, be averse to, or afraid of, presenting yourselves, your souls and bodies, as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God?—to God your Creator, your Redeemer, your Sanctifier? Can any thing be more desirable than this entire self dedication to him? And is it not your wish that all mankind

should unite in this "reasonable service?" Surely no one can be averse to this, without being an enemy to all mankind.

8. And why should you be afraid of, or averse to, what is naturally implied in this? namely, the offering up all our thoughts, and words, and actions, as a spiritual sacrifice to God, acceptable to him through the blood and intercession of his well beloved Son? Surely you cannot deny that this is good and profitable to men, as well as pleasing to God. Should you not then devoutly pray, that both you and all mankind may thus worship him in spirit and in truth?

9. Suffer me to ask one question more. Why should any man of reason and religion be either afraid of, or averse to, salvation from all sin? Is not sin the greatest evil on this side hell? And if so, does it not naturally follow, that an entire deliverance from it is one of the greatest blessings on this side heaven? How earnestly then should it be prayed for by all the children of God! By sin I mean, *a voluntary transgression of a known law.* Are you averse to being delivered from this? Are you afraid of such a deliverance? Do you then love sin, that you are so unwilling to part with it? Surely no. You do not love either the devil or his works. You rather wish to be totally delivered from them: to have sin rooted out both of your life and your heart.

10. I have frequently observed, and not without surprise, that the opposers of perfection are more vehement against it when it is placed in this view, than in any other whatsoever: they will allow all you say of the love of God and man; of the mind which was in Christ; of the fruit of the Spirit; of the image of God; of universal holiness; of entire self dedication; of sanctification in spirit, soul, and body; yea, and of the offering up of all our thoughts, words, and actions, as a sacrifice to God;—all this they will allow, so we will allow sin, a little sin, to remain in us till death.

11. Pray compare this with that remarkable passage in John Bunyan's Holy War. "When Immanuel," says he, "had driven Diabolus and all his forces out of the city of Man-soul, Diabolus preferred a petition to Immanuel, that he might have only a small part of the city. When this was rejected, he begged to have only a little room within the walls." But Immanuel answered, "He should have no place in it at all, no, not to rest the sole of his foot."

Had not the good old man forgot himself? Did not the force of truth so prevail over him here, as utterly to overturn his own system?—To assert perfection in the clearest manner? For if this is not salvation from sin, I cannot tell what is.

12. "No," says a great man, "this is the error of errors: I hate it from my heart. I pursue it through all the world with fire and sword." Nay, why so vehement? Do you seriously think there is no error under heaven equal to this? Here is something which I cannot understand. Why are those that oppose salvation from sin, (few excepted,) so eager? I had almost said, furious? Are you fighting *pro aris et focis!* For God and your country? For all you have in the world? For all that is near and dear unto you? For your liberty? Your life? In God's name, why are you so fond of sin? What good has it ever done you? What good is it ever likely to do you, either in this world, or in the world to come? And why are you so violent against those that hope for a deli-

verance from it? Have patience with us, if we are in an error: yea, suffer us to enjoy our error. If we should not attain it, the very expectation of this deliverance gives us present comfort; yea, and ministers strength, to resist those enemies which we expect to conquer. If you could persuade us to despair of that victory, we should give over the contest. Now "we are saved by hope:" from this very hope a degree of salvation springs. Be not angry at those who are *felices errore suo;* happy in their mistake. Else, be their opinion right or wrong, your temper is undeniably sinful: bear then with *us*, as we do with *you;* and see whether the Lord will not deliver us! Whether he is not able, yea, and willing, "to save them to the uttermost that come unto God through him."

SERMON LXXXII.—*Spiritual Worship.*

"This is the true God and eternal life," 1 John v, 20.

1. IN this epistle, St. John speaks, not to any particular church, but to all the Christians of that age: although more especially to them among whom he then resided. And in them he speaks to the whole Christian church, in all succeeding ages.

2. In this letter, or rather tract, (for he was present with those to whom it was more immediately directed, probably being not able to preach to them any longer, because of his extreme old age,) he does not treat directly of faith, which St. Paul had done; neither of inward and outward holiness, concerning which, both St. Paul, St. James, and St. Peter, had spoken; but of the foundation of all, the happy and holy communion which the faithful have with God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

3. In the preface, he describes the authority by which he wrote and spoke, chap. i, 1–4, and expressly points out the design of his present writing. To the preface exactly answers the conclusion of the epistle, more largely explaining the same design, and recapitulating the marks of our communion with God, by "*we know*," thrice repeated, chap. v, 18–20.

4. The tract itself treats,

First, Severally of communion with the Father, chap. i, 5–10; of communion with the Son, chap. ii, and iii; of communion with the Spirit, chap. iv.

Secondly, Conjointly, of the testimony of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; on which, faith in Christ, the being born of God, love to God, and his children, the keeping his commandments, and victory over the world, are founded, chap. v, 1–12.

5. The recapitulation begins, chap. v, 18, "We know that he who is born of God;" who sees and loves God; "sinneth not;" so long as this loving faith abideth in him. "We know we are of God;" children of God, by the witness and the fruit of the Spirit; "and the whole world," all who have not the Spirit, "lieth in the wicked one." They are, and live, and dwell in him as the children of God do in the Holy One. "We know, that the Son of God is come, and hath given us [a spiritual] understanding, that we may know the true one;" the faithful

and true Witness. "And we are in the true One;" as branches in the vine. "This is the true God, and eternal life."

In considering these important words, we may inquire,

I. How is he the true God?

II. How is he eternal life? I shall then,

III. Add a few inferences.

I. And first we may inquire, How is he the true God? He is "God over all blessed for ever." "He was with God;" with God the Father; "from the beginning;" from eternity; "and was God. He and the Father are one;" and, consequently, "he thought it not robbery to be equal with God." Accordingly, the inspired writers give him all the titles of the most high God. They call him over and over, by the incommunicable name, JEHOVAH; never given to any creature. They ascribe to him all the attributes, and all the works of God. So that we need not scruple to pronounce him, "God of God, light of light, very God of very God: in glory equal with the Father, in majesty, co-eternal."

2. He is the true God, the only cause, the sole creator of all things. "By him," saith the apostle Paul, "were created all things that are in heaven, and that are on earth;"—yea, earth and heaven themselves; but the inhabitants are named, because more noble than the house;—"visible and invisible." The several species of which are subjoined: "whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers." So St. John: "all things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made." And accordingly St. Paul applies to him those strong words of the Psalmist: "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands."

3. And as the true God, he is also the supporter of all the things that he hath made. He beareth, upholdeth, sustaineth, all created things by the word of his power: by the same powerful word, which brought them out of nothing. As this was absolutely necessary for the beginning of their existence, it is equally so for the continuance of it: were his almighty influence withdrawn, they could not subsist a moment longer. Hold up a stone in the air; the moment you withdraw your hand, it naturally falls to the ground. In like manner, were he to withdraw his hand for a moment, the creation would fall into nothing.

4. As the true God, he is likewise the preserver of all things. He not only keeps them in being, but preserves them in that degree of well being, which is suitable to their several natures. He preserves them in their several relations, connections, and dependencies, so as to compose one system of beings, to form one entire universe, according to the counsel of his will. How strongly and beautifully is this expressed: Τα παντα εν αυτω συνεστηκε· "By whom all things consist:" or, more literally, "By and in him are all things compacted into one system." He is not only the support, but also the cement of the whole universe.

5. I would particularly remark, (what perhaps has not been sufficiently observed,) that he is the true author of all the *motion* that is in the universe. To spirits, indeed, he has given a small degree of self moving power, but not to matter. All matter, of whatever kind it be, is absolutely and totally inert. It does not, cannot, in any case, move

itself; and whenever any part of it seems to move, it is in reality moved by something else. See that log, which, vulgarly speaking, *moves* on the sea! it is in reality *moved* by the water. The water is moved by the wind; that is, a current of air. And the air itself owes all its motion to the ethereal fire, a particle of which is attached to every particle of it. Deprive it of that fire and it moves no longer: it is fixed: it is as inert as sand. Remove fluidity (owing to the ethereal fire intermixed with it) from water, and it has no more motion than the log. Impact fire into iron, by hammering it when red hot and it has no more motion than fixed air, or frozen water. But when it is unfixed, when it is in its most active state, what gives motion to fire? The very heathen will tell you. It is,

Totam Mens agitans molem, et magno se corpore miscens.

6. To pursue this a little farther: we say, the moon moves round the earth; the earth and the other planets move round the sun; the sun moves round its own axis. But these are only vulgar expressions: for if we speak the truth, neither the sun, moon, nor stars, *move*. None of these move themselves: they are all *moved* every moment by the Almighty hand that made them.

"Yes," says sir Isaac, "the sun, moon, and all the heavenly bodies, do move, do gravitate, towards each other." Gravitate! What is that? Why, they all *attract* each other, in proportion to the quantity of matter they contain. "Nonsense all over," says Mr. Hutchinson; "jargon, self contradiction! Can any thing *act* where it is not? no; they are continually *impelled* towards each other." Impelled! by what? "By the subtile matter, the ether, or electric fire." But remember! be it ever so subtile, it is matter still: consequently, it is as inert in itself as either sand or marble. It cannot therefore move itself, but probably it is the first material mover; the main spring, whereby the Creator and preserver of all things is pleased to move the universe.

7. The true God is also the *Redeemer* of all the children of men. It pleased the Father to lay upon him the iniquities of us all, that by the one oblation of himself once offered, when he tasted death for every man, he might make a full and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world.

8. Again: The true God is the *governor* of all things: "His kingdom ruleth over all." The government rests upon his shoulder, throughout all ages. He is the Lord and disposer of the whole creation, and every part of it. And in how astonishing a manner does he govern the world! How far are his ways above human thought! How little do we know of his methods of government! Only this we know, *Ita præsides singulis sicut universis, et universis sicut singulis!*" Thou presidest over each creature, as if it were the universe, and over the universe, as over each individual creature. Dwell a little upon this sentiment: what a glorious mystery does it contain! It is paraphrased in the words recited above:

"FATHER, how wide thy glories shine!
Lord of the universe,—and mine.
Thy goodness watches o'er the whole
As all the world were but one soul:
Yet keeps my every sacred hair,
As I remain'd thy single care!"

9. And yet there is a difference, as we said before, in his providential government over the children of men. A pious writer observes, there is a three fold circle of Divine Providence. The *outermost circle* includes all the sons of men; Heathens, Mohammedans, Jews, and Christians. He causeth his sun to rise upon all. He giveth them rain and fruitful seasons. He pours ten thousand benefits upon them, and fills their hearts with food and gladness. With an *interior circle*, he encompasses the whole visible Christian church; all that name the name of Christ. He has an additional regard to these, and a nearer attention to their welfare. But the *innermost circle* of his providence encloses only the invisible church of Christ; all real Christians, wherever dispersed in all corners of the earth; all that worship God (whatever denomination they are of) in spirit and in truth. He keeps these as the apple of an eye: he hides them under the shadow of his wings. And it is to these in particular, that our Lord says, "Even the hairs of your head are all numbered."

10. Lastly, being the true God, he is *the End* of all things; according to that solemn declaration of the apostle: Rom xi, 36, "Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things:" *Of him*, as the Creator; *through him*, as the Sustainer and Preserver; and *to him* as the ultimate end of all.

II. In all these senses, Jesus Christ is the true God. But how is he Eternal Life?

1. The thing directly intended in this expression, is not that he *will be* eternal life: although this is a great and important truth, and never to be forgotten. "He is the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him." He is the Purchaser of that "crown of life," which will be given to all that are "faithful unto death." And he will be the soul of all their joys to all the saints in glory.

> "The flame of angelical love
> Is kindled at Jesus's face;
> And all the enjoyment above
> Consists in the rapturous gaze!"

2. The thing directly intended is not, that he is the resurrection: although this also is true, according to his own declaration; "I am the resurrection and the life:" agreeable to which are St. Paul's words; "As in Adam all died, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." So that we may well say, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who—hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

3. But waving what he *will be* hereafter, we are here called to consider, what he *is now*. He is now the life of every thing that lives, in any kind or degree. He is the source of the lowest species of life; that of *vegetables;* as being the source of all the motion on which vegetation depends. He is the fountain of the life of *animals;* the power by which the heart beats, and the circulating juices flow. He is the fountain of all the life which man possesses in common with other animals. And if we distinguish the *rational* from the animal life, he is the source of this also.

4. But how infinitely short does all this fall of the life which is here directly intended, and of which the apostle speaks so explicitly in the

preceding verses! ver. 11, 12, "This is the testimony, that God hath given us eternal life; and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; [the eternal life here spoken of;] and he that hath not the Son, [of God,] hath not [this] life." As if he had said, This is the sum of the testimony which God hath testified of his Son, that God hath given us, not only a title to, but the real beginning of eternal life: and this life is purchased by, and treasured up in his Son; who has all the springs and the fulness of it in himself, to communicate to his body, the church.

5. This eternal life then commences, when it pleases the Father to reveal his Son in our hearts; when we first know Christ, being enabled to "call him Lord by the Holy Ghost;" when we can testify, our conscience bearing us witness in the Holy Ghost, "The life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." And then it is that happiness begins; happiness real, solid, substantial. Then it is that heaven is opened in the soul, that the proper heavenly state commences, while the love of God, as loving us, is shed abroad in the heart, instantly producing love to all mankind; general, pure benevolence, together with its genuine fruits, lowliness, meekness, patience, contentedness in every state; an entire, clear, full acquiescence in the whole will of God; enabling us to "rejoice evermore, and in every thing to give thanks."

6. As our knowledge and our love of him increase, by the same degrees, and in the same proportion, the kingdom of an inward heaven must necessarily increase also; while we "grow up in all things into Him, who is our head." And when we are Εν αυτῳ πεπληρωμενοι, *complete in him*, as our translators render it; but more properly, when we are *filled with him;* when "Christ in us, the hope of glory," is our God and our all; when he has taken the full possession of our heart; when he reigns therein without a rival, the Lord of every motion there; when we dwell in Christ, and Christ in us, we are one with Christ, and Christ with us then we are completely happy; then we live "all the life that is hid with Christ in God." Then, and not till then, we properly experience what that word meaneth: "God is love; and whosoever dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him."

III. I have now only to add a few inferences from the preceding observations.

1. And we may learn from hence, first, that as there is but one God in heaven above and in the earth beneath; so there is only one happiness for created spirits, either in heaven or earth. This one God made our heart for himself; and it cannot rest, till it resteth in him. It is true, that while we are in the vigour of youth and health; while our blood dances in our veins; while the world smiles upon us, and we have all the conveniences, yea, and superfluities of life, we frequently have pleasing dreams, and enjoy a kind of happiness. But it cannot continue; it flies away like a shadow; and even while it does, it is not solid or substantial: it does not satisfy the soul. We still pant after something else, something which we have not. Give a man every thing that this world can give, still, as Horace observed near two thousand years ago:

Curtæ nescio quid semper abest rei.

Still —

"Amidst our plenty something still,
To me, to thee, to him is wanting!"

That *something* is neither more nor less, than the knowledge and love of God; without which no spirit can be happy either in heaven or earth.

2. Permit me to recite my own experience, in confirmation of this: I distinctly remember, that, even in my childhood, even when I was at school, I have often said, "They say, the life of a school boy is the happiest in the world: but I am sure, I am not happy: for I am not content; and so cannot be happy." When I had lived a few years longer, being in the vigour of youth, a stranger to pain and sickness, and particularly to lowness of spirits; (which I do not remember to have felt one quarter of an hour ever since I was born;) having plenty of all things, in the midst of sensible and amiable friends, who loved me, and I loved them, and being in the way of life, which, of all others, suited my inclinations; still I was not happy. I wondered why I was not, and could not imagine what the reason was. The reason certainly was, I did not know God, the source of present as well as eternal happiness. What is a clear proof that I was not then happy, is, that upon the coolest reflection, I knew not one week which I would have thought it worth while to have lived over again; taking it with every inward and outward sensation, without any variation at all.

3. But a pious man affirms, "When I was young I was happy; though I was utterly without God in the world." I do not believe you: though I doubt not but you believe yourself. But you are deceived, as I have been over and over. Such is the condition of human life:—

> "Flowrets and myrtles fragrant seem to rise:
> All is at distance fair; but near at hand,
> The gay deceit mocks the desiring eyes
> With thorns, and desert heath, and barren sands."

Look forward on any distant prospect: how beautiful does it appear! Come up to it; and the beauty vanishes away; and it is rough and disagreeable. Just so is life. But when the scene is past, it resumes its former appearance; and we seriously believe, that we were then very happy, though, in reality, we were far otherwise. For as none is now, so none ever was happy, without the loving knowledge of the true God.

4. We may learn hence, secondly, that this happy knowledge of the true God is only another name for religion; I mean Christian religion; which indeed is the only one that deserves the name. Religion, as to the nature or essence of it, does not lie in this or that set of notions, vulgarly called *faith;* nor in a round of duties, however carefully *reformed* from error and superstition. It does not consist in any number of outward actions. No: it properly and directly consists in the knowledge and love of God, as manifested in the Son of his love, through the eternal Spirit. And this naturally leads to every heavenly temper, and to every good word and work.

5. We learn hence, thirdly, that none but a Christian is happy; none but a real inward Christian. A glutton, a drunkard, a gamester, may be *merry;* but he cannot be happy. The beau, the belle, may eat and drink, and rise up to play; but still they feel they are not happy. Men or women may adorn their own dear persons with all the colours of the rainbow. They may dance, and sing, and hurry to and fro, and flutter hither and thither. They may roll up and down in their splendid carriages, and talk insipidly to each other. They may hasten from one diversion to another: but happiness is not there. They are still "walk

ing in a vain shadow, and disquieting themselves in vain." One of their own poets has truly pronounced, concerning the whole life of these sons of pleasure:

> "'Tis a dull farce, an empty show:
> Powder, and pocket glass, and beau."

I cannot but observe of that fine writer, that he came near the mark; and yet fell short of it. In his Solomon, (one of the noblest poems in the English tongue,) he clearly shows where happiness *is not;* that it is not to be found in natural knowledge, in power, or in the pleasures of sense or imagination. But he does not show where it is to be found. He could not; for he did not know it himself. Yet he came near it, when he said,

> "Restore, great Father, thy instructed son;
> And in my act may thy great will be done!"

6. We learn hence, fourthly, that every Christian is happy; and that he who is not happy is not a Christian. If, as was observed above, religion is happiness, every one that has it must be happy. This appears from the very nature of the thing: for if religion and happiness are in fact the same, it is impossible that any man can possess the former, without possessing the latter also. He cannot have religion without having happiness; seeing they are utterly inseparable.

And it is equally certain on the other hand, that he who is not happy, is not a Christian: seeing if he was a real Christian, he could not but be happy. But I allow an exception here in favour of those who are under violent temptation; yea, and of those who are under deep nervous disorders, which are indeed a species of insanity. The clouds and darkness which then overwhelm the soul, suspend its happiness; especially if Satan is permitted to second those disorders, by pouring in his fiery darts. But, excepting these cases, the observation will hold, and i. should be well attended to,—Whoever is not happy, yea, happy in God, is not a Christian.

7. Are not *you* a living proof of this? Do not you still wander to and fro, seeking rest, but finding none?—Pursuing happiness, but never overtaking it? And who can blame you for pursuing it? It is the very end of your being. The great Creator made nothing to be miserable, but every creature to be happy in its kind. And upon a general review of the works of his hands, he pronounced them all *very good;* which they would not have been, had not every intelligent creature, yea, every one capable of pleasure and pain, been happy in answering the end of its creation. If *you* are now unhappy, it is because you are in an unnatural state: and shall you not sigh for deliverance from it? "The whole creation" being now "subject to vanity," "groaneth and travaileth in pain together." I blame you only, or pity you rather, for taking a wrong way to a right end: for seeking happiness where it never was, and never can be found. You seek happiness in your fellow creatures, instead of your Creator. But these can no more make you happy, than they can make you immortal. If you have ears to hear, every creature cries aloud, "Happiness is not in me." All these are, in truth, "broken cisterns, that can hold no water." Oh turn unto your rest! Turn to him, in whom are hid all the treasures of happiness! Turn unto him, "who giveth liberally unto all men;" and he will give you "to drink of the water of life freely."

8. You cannot find your long sought happiness in all the pleasures of the world. Are they not "deceitful upon the weights?" Are they not lighter than vanity itself? How long will ye "feed upon that which is not bread?" Which may amuse, but cannot satisfy. You cannot find it in the religion of the world: either in opinions, or a mere round of outward duties. Vain labour! Is not God a Spirit? and therefore to be "worshipped in spirit and in truth?" In this alone can you find the happiness you seek; in the union of your spirit with the Father of spirits; in the knowledge and love of him who is the fountain of happiness, sufficient for all the souls he has made.

9. But where is he to be found? Shall we go up into heaven, or down into hell to seek him? "Shall we take the wings of the morning," and search for him "in the uttermost parts of the sea?" Nay, *Quod petis, hic est!* What a strange word to fall from the pen of a heathen! "What you seek, is here!" He is "about your bed." He is "about your path." He "besets you behind and before." He "lays his hand upon you." Lo! God is here! not afar off. Now, believe and feel him near! May he now reveal himself in your heart! Know him! Love him! and you are happy.

10. Are you already happy in him? then see that you "hold fast whereunto ye have attained!" "Watch and pray," that you may never be "moved from your steadfastness." "Look unto yourselves, that ye lose not what ye have gained, but that ye receive a full reward." In so doing, expect a continual growth in grace, in the loving knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Expect that the power of the Highest shall suddenly overshadow you, that all sin may be destroyed, and nothing may remain in your heart, but holiness unto the Lord. And this moment, and every moment, "present yourselves a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God," and "glorify him with your body and with your spirit, which are God's!"

SERMON LXXXIII.—*On Spiritual Idolatry.*

"Little children, keep yourselves from idols," 1 John v, 21.

1. THERE are two words that occur several times in this epistle; παιδια and τεκνια; both of which our translators render by the same expression, *little children.* But their meaning is very different. The former is very properly rendered *little children;* for it means, *babes in Christ:* those that have lately tasted of his love, and are, as yet, weak and unestablished therein. The latter might, with more propriety be rendered, *beloved children;* as it does not denote any more than the affection of the speaker to those whom he had begotten in the Lord.

2. An ancient historian relates, that when the apostle was so enfeebled by age, as not to be able to preach, he was frequently brought into the congregation in his chair, and just uttered, "Beloved children, love one another." He could not have given a more important advice.—And equally important is this which lies before us; equally necessary for every part of the church of Christ. "Beloved children, keep yourselves from idols."

3. Indeed there is a close connection between them: one cannot subsist without the other. As there is no firm foundation for the love

of our brethren, except the love of God, so there is no possibility of loving God, except we keep ourselves from idols.

But what are the idols of which the apostle speaks? This is the first thing to be considered. We may then, in the second place, inquire, how shall we keep ourselves from them?

I. 1. We are first to consider, What are the idols of which the apostle speaks? I do not conceive him to mean, at least not principally, the idols that were worshipped by the heathens. They to whom he was writing, whether they had been Jews or heathens, were not in much danger from these. There is no probability that the Jews now converted, had ever been guilty of worshipping them: as deeply given to this gross idolatry as the Israelites had been for many ages, they were hardly ever entangled therein after their return from the Babylonish captivity. From that period, the whole body of Jews had shown a constant, deep abhorrence of it; and the heathens, after they had once turned to the living God, had their former idols in the utmost detestation. They abhorred to touch the unclean thing; yea, they chose to lay down their lives, rather than turn to the worship of those gods, whom they now knew to be devils.

2. Neither can we reasonably suppose, that he speaks of those idols that are now worshipped in the church of Rome: whether angels, or the souls of departed saints, or images of gold, silver, wood or stone. None of these idols were known in the Christian church, till some centuries after the time of the apostles. Once, indeed, St. John himself "fell down to worship before the face of an angel" that spake unto him; probably mistaking him, from his glorious appearance, for the Great Angel of the Covenant; but the strong reproof of the angel, which immediately followed, secured the Christians from imitating that bad example: "See thou do it not:" as glorious as I appear, I am not thy Master. "I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets: worship God," Rev. xxii, 9.

3. Setting, then, pagan and Romish idols aside, what are those of which we are here warned by the apostle? The preceding words show us the meaning of these. "This is the true God;" the end of all the souls he has made; the centre of all created spirits;—"and eternal life;" the only foundation of present as well as eternal happiness. To him, therefore, alone, our heart is due. And he cannot, he will not quit his claim, or consent to its being given to any other. He is continually saying to every child of man, "My son, give me thy heart!" And to give our heart to any other is plain idolatry. Accordingly, whatever takes our heart from him, or shares it with him, is an idol; or, in other words, whatever we seek happiness in, independent of God.

4. Take an instance that occurs almost every day: A person who has been long involved in the world, surrounded and fatigued with abundance of business, having at length acquired an easy fortune, disengages himself from all business, and retires into the country,—to be happy. Happy in what? Why in taking his ease. For he intends now,

Somno et inertibus horis
Ducere sollicitæ jucunda oblivia vitæ.

To sleep, and pass away,
In gentle inactivity the day.

Happy in eating and drinking whatever his heart desires perhaps more elegant fare than that of the old Roman, who feasted his imagination before the treat was served up; who, before he left the town, consoled himself with the thought of "fat bacon, and cabbage too!"

Uncta satis pingui ponentur oluscula lardo!

Happy,—in altering, enlarging, rebuilding, or at least decorating, the old mansion house he has purchased; and likewise in improving every thing about it; the stables, out houses, grounds. But, mean time, where does God come in? No where at all. He did not think about him. He no more thought of the King of heaven, than of the king of France. God is not in his plan. The knowledge and love of God are entirely out of the question. Therefore, this whole scheme of happiness in retirement is idolatry, from beginning to end.

5. If we descend to particulars, the first species of this idolatry is what St. John terms, *the desire of the flesh.* We are apt to take this in too narrow a meaning, as if it related to one of the senses only. Not so: this expression equally refers to all the outward senses. It means the seeking happiness in the gratification of any, or all of the external senses; although more particularly of the three lower senses; tasting, smelling, and feeling. It means, the seeking happiness herein, if not in a gross, indelicate manner, by open intemperance, by gluttony or drunkenness, or shameless debauchery; yet, in a regular kind of epicurism; in a genteel sensuality; in such an elegant course of self indulgence, as does not disorder either the head or the stomach; as does not at all impair our health, or blemish our reputation.

6. But we must not imagine this species of idolatry is confined to the rich and great. In this also, "the toe of the peasant," (as our poet speaks,) "treads upon the heel of the courtier." Thousands in low, as well as in high life, sacrifice to this idol: seeking their happiness, (though in a more humble manner,) in gratifying their outward senses. It is true, their meat, their drink, and the objects that gratify their other senses, are of a coarser kind. But still they make up all the happiness they either have or seek, and usurp the hearts which are due to God.

7. The second species of idolatry mentioned by the apostle, is, *the desire of the eye:* that is, the seeking of happiness in gratifying the imagination; (chiefly by means of the eyes;) that internal sense, which is as natural to men as either sight or hearing. This is gratified by such objects as are either grand, or beautiful, or uncommon. But as to grand objects, it seems they do not please any longer than they are new. Were we to survey the pyramids of Egypt daily for a year, what pleasure would they then give? Nay, what pleasure does a far grander object than these,

"The ocean rolling on the shelly shore,"

give to one who has been long accustomed to it? Yea, what pleasure do we generally receive from the grandest object in the universe,—

"Yon ample, azure sky,
Terribly large, and wonderfully bright,
With stars unnumber'd, and unmeasured light?"

8. Beautiful objects are the next general source of the pleasures of the imagination: the works of nature in particular. So persons in all ages have been delighted

"With sylvan scenes, and hill and dale,
And liquid lapse of murmuring streams.'

Others are pleased with adding art to nature; as in gardens, with their various ornaments: others with mere works of art; as buildings, and representations of nature, whether in statues or paintings. Many, likewise, find pleasure in beautiful apparel, or furniture of various kinds. But novelty must be added to beauty, as well as grandeur, or it soon palls upon the sense.

9. Are we to refer to the head of beauty, the pleasure which many take in a favourite animal? Suppose a sparrow, a parrot, a cat, a lap dog? Sometimes it may be owing to this. At other times, none but the person pleased can find any beauty at all in the favourite. Nay, perchance it is, in the eyes of all other persons, superlatively ugly. In this case, the pleasure seems to arise from mere whim or caprice; that is, madness.

10. Must we not refer to the head of novelty, chiefly, the pleasure found in most diversions and amusements; which, were we to repeat them daily but a few months, would be utterly flat and insipid? To the same head, we may refer the pleasure that is taken in collecting curiosities; whether they are natural or artificial, whether old or new. This sweetens the labour of the virtuoso, and makes all his labour light.

But it is not chiefly to novelty, that we are to impute the pleasure we receive from music. Certainly this has an intrinsic beauty, as well as frequently an intrinsic grandeur. This is a beauty and grandeur of a peculiar kind, not easy to be expressed: nearly related to the sublime and the beautiful in poetry, which give an exquisite pleasure. And yet it may be allowed that novelty heightens the pleasure which arises from any of these sources.

12. From the study of languages, from criticism, and from history, we receive a pleasure of a mixed nature. In all these, there is always something new; frequently, something beautiful or sublime. And history not only gratifies the imagination in all these respects, but likewise pleases us by touching our passions; our love, desire, joy, pity. The last of these gives us a strong pleasure, though strangely mixed with a kind of pain. So that one need not wonder at the exclamation of a fine poet,

"What is all mirth but turbulence unholy,
When to the charms compared of heavenly melancholy?"

13. The love of novelty is immeasurably gratified by experimental philosophy; and, indeed, by every branch of natural philosophy; which opens an immense field for still new discoveries. But is there not likewise a pleasure therein, as well as in mathematical and metaphysical studies, which does not result from the imagination, but from the exercise of the understanding? Unless we will say, that the newness of the discoveries which we make by mathematical or metaphysical researches, is one reason, at least, if not the chief, of the pleasure we receive therefrom.

14. I dwell the longer on these things, because so very few see them in the true point of view. The generality of men, and more particularly men of sense and learning, are so far from suspecting that there is, or can be the least harm in them, that they seriously believe, it is matter of great praise, to *give ourselves wholly to them.* Who of them,

for instance, would not admire and commend the indefatigable industry of that great philosopher, who says, "I have now been eight and thirty years at my parish of Upminster; and I have made it clear, that there are no less than three and fifty species of butterflies therein: but if God should spare my life a few years longer, I do not doubt but I should demonstrate, there are five and fifty!" I allow that most of these studies have their use, and that it is possible to *use* without *abusing* them. But if we seek our happiness in any of these things, then it commences an *idol*. And the enjoyment of it, however it may be admired and applauded by the world, is condemned by God as neither better nor worse than damnable *idolatry*.

15. The third kind of love of the world, the apostle speaks of under that uncommon expression, η αλαζονεια τς βιυ. This is rendered by our translators, *the pride of life*. It is usually supposed to mean, the pomp and splendour of those that are in high life. But has it not a more extensive sense? Does it not rather mean, the seeking happiness in the praise of men, which, above all things, engenders pride? When this is pursued in a more pompous way, by kings, or illustrious men, we call it, "thirst for glory;" when it is sought in a lower way, by ordinary men, it is styled, "taking care of our reputation." In plain terms, it is seeking the honour that cometh of men, instead of that which cometh of God only.

16. But what creates a difficulty here, is this: we are required, not only to "give no offence to any one," and to "provide things honest in the sight of all men," but to "please all men for their good to edification." But how difficult is it to do this, with a single eye to God? We ought to do all that in us lies, to prevent "the good that is in us from being evil spoken of." Yea, we ought to value a clear reputation, if it be given us, only less than a good conscience. But yet, if we seek our happiness therein, we are liable to perish in our idolatry.

17. To which of the preceding heads is the *love of money* to be referred? Perhaps sometimes to one, and sometimes to another; as it is a means of procuring gratifications, either for "the desire of the flesh," for "the desire of the eyes," or for "the pride of life." In any of these cases, money is only pursued, in order to a farther end. But it is sometimes pursued for its own sake, without any farther view. One who is properly a miser, loves and seeks money for its own sake. He looks no farther, but places his happiness in the acquiring or the possessing of it. And this is a species of idolatry, distant from all the preceding; and indeed the lowest, basest idolatry, of which the human soul is capable. To seek happiness either in gratifying this, or any other of the desires above mentioned, is effectually to renounce the true God, and to set up an idol in his place. In a word, so many objects as there are in the world, wherein men seek happiness instead of seeking it in God, so many *idols* they set up in their hearts; so many species of *idolatry* they practise.

18. I would take notice of only one more, which, though it in some measure falls in with several of the preceding, yet, in many respects, is distinct from them all; I mean the idolizing a human creature. Undoubtedly it is the will of God that we should all love one another. It is his will that we should love our relations and our Christian brethren with a peculiar love; and those in particular, whom he has made par

ticularly profitable to our souls. These we are commanded to "love fervently;" yet still "with a pure heart." But is not this "impossible with man?" To retain the strength and tenderness of affection, and yet, without any stain to the soul, with unspotted purity? I do not mean only unspotted by lust. I know, this is possible. I know a person may have an unutterable affection for another, without any desire of this kind. But is it without idolatry? Is it not loving the creature more than the Creator? Is it not putting a man or woman in the place of God? Giving them your heart? Let this be carefully considered, even by those whom God has joined together; by husbands and wives, parents and children. It cannot be denied, that these ought to love one another tenderly: they are commanded so to do. But they are neither commanded, nor permitted, to love one another idolatrously. Yet how common is this! How frequently is a husband, a wife, a child, put in the place of God! How many that are accounted good Christians, fix their affections on each other, so as to leave no place for God! They seek their happiness in the creature, not in the Creator. One may truly say to the other,

"I view thee, lord and end of my desires"

That is, "I desire nothing more but thee! Thou art the thing that I long for! All my desire is unto thee, and unto the remembrance of thy name." Now, if this is not flat idolatry, I cannot tell what is.

II. Having largely considered, what those idols are, of which the apostle speaks, I come now to inquire, (which may be done more briefly,) how we may keep ourselves from them?

1. In order to this, I would advise you, first, Be deeply convinced that none of them bring happiness; that no thing, no person under the sun, no, nor the amassment of all together, can give any solid, satisfactory happiness to any child of man. The world, itself, the giddy, thoughtless world, acknowledge this unawares, while they allow, nay, vehemently maintain, "no man upon earth is contented." The very same observation was made near two thousand years ago:—

Nemo quam sibi sortem
Seu ratio dederit, seu fors objecerit, illâ
Contentus vivat.

Let fortune or let choice the station give
To man, yet none on earth contented live.

And if no man upon earth is contented, it is certain, no man is happy. For whatever station we are in, discontent is incompatible with happiness.

2. Indeed not only the giddy, but the thinking part of the world, allow, that no man is contented: the melancholy proofs of which we see on every side, in high and low, rich and poor. And, generally, the more understanding they have, the more discontented they are. For,

"They know with more distinction to complain,
And have superior sense in feeling pain."

It is true, every one has (to use the cant term of the day, and an excellent one it is) *his hobby horse!* Something that pleases the great boy for a few hours or days, and wherein he *hopes* to be happy. But though

"Hope blooms eternal in the human breast;
Man never *is*, but always *to be* blest."

Still he is walking in a vain shadow, which will soon vanish away! So that universal experience, both our own, and that of all our friends and acquaintance, clearly proves, that as God made our hearts for himself, so they cannot rest till they rest in him: that till we acquaint ourselves with him, we cannot be at peace. As "a scorner" of the wisdom of God, "seeketh wisdom and findeth it not;" so a scorner of happiness in God, seeketh happiness, but findeth none.

3. When you are thoroughly convinced of this, I advise you, secondly, Stand and consider what you are about. Will you be a fool and a madman all your days? Is it not high time to come to your senses? At length, awake out of sleep, and shake yourself from the dust! Break loose from this miserable idolatry, and "choose the better part!" Steadily resolve, to seek happiness where it may be found; where it cannot be sought in vain. Resolve to seek it in the true God, the fountain of all blessedness! And cut off all delay. Straightway put in execution what you have resolved! Seeing "all things are ready," "acquaint thyself now with him, and be at peace."

4. But do not either resolve or attempt to execute your resolution, trusting in your own strength. If you do, you will be utterly foiled. You are not able to contend with the evil world, much less with your own evil heart; and least of all, with the powers of darkness. Cry, therefore, to the Strong for strength. Under a deep sense of your own weakness and helplessness, trust thou in the Lord Jehovah, in whom is everlasting strength. I advise you to cry to him for repentance in particular, not only for a full consciousness of your own impotence, but for a piercing sense of the exceeding guilt, baseness, and madness of the idolatry that has long swallowed you up. Cry for a thorough knowledge of yourself; of all your sinfulness and guiltiness. Pray that you may be fully discovered to yourself: that you may know yourself as also you are known. When once you are possessed of this genuine conviction, all your idols will lose their charms. And you will wonder how you could so long lean upon those broken reeds, which had so often sunk under you.

5. What should you ask for next?

> "Jesus, now I have lost my all,
> Let me upon thy bosom fall!"

Now let me see thee in thy vesture dipped in blood!

> "Now stand in all thy wounds confest,
> And wrap me in thy crimson vest!"

Hast thou not said, "If thou canst believe, thou shalt see the glory of God?" Lord, *I would* believe! Help thou mine unbelief. And help me *now!* Help me now to enter into the rest that remaineth for the people of God. For those who give thee their heart, their whole heart Who receive thee as their God, and their all. Oh thou that art fairer than the children of men, full of grace are thy lips! Speak that I may see thee! And as the shadows flee before the sun, so let all my idols vanish at thy presence!

6. From the moment that you begin to experience this, fight the good fight of faith: take the kingdom of heaven by violence! Take it as it were by storm! Deny yourself every pleasure that you are not divinely conscious brings you nearer to God. Take up your cross daily: regard no pain, if it lies in your way to him. If you are called thereto,

scruple not to pluck out the right eye, and to cast it from you. Nothing is impossible to him that believeth: you can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth you. Do valiantly; and stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free. Yea, go on in his name, and in the power of his might, till you "know all that love of God that passeth knowledge:" and then you have only to wait till he shall call you into his everlasting kingdom!

SERMON LXXXIV.—*On Dissipation.*

"This I speak——that ye may attend upon the LORD without distraction, 1 Cor. vii, 35.

1. ALMOST in every part of our nation, more especially in the large and populous towns, we hear a general complaint, among sensible persons, of the still increasing *dissipation.* It is observed to diffuse itself more and more, in the court, the city, and the country. From the continual mention which is made of this, and the continual declamations against it, one would naturally imagine that a word so commonly used was perfectly understood. Yet it may be doubted whether it be or no. Nay, we may very safely affirm, that few of those who frequently use the term, understand what it means. One reason of this is, that although the thing has been long among us, especially since the time of king Charles the second, (one of the most dissipated mortals that ever breathed,) yet the word is not of long standing. It was hardly heard of fifty years ago; and not much before the present reign. So lately has it been imported: and yet it is so in every one's mouth, that it is already worn threadbare; being one of the cant words of the day.

2. Another reason why it is so little understood, may be, that among the numberless writers that swarm about us, there is not one (at least whom I have seen) that has published so much as a sixpenny pamphlet concerning it. We have, indeed, one short essay upon the subject: but exceeding few have seen it, as it stands in the midst of a volume of essays, the author of which is little known in the world. And even this is so far from going to the bottom of the subject, that it only slightly glances over it; and does not so much as give us one definition of dissipation, (which I looked narrowly for,) from the beginning to the end.

3. We are accustomed to speak of dissipation, as having respect chiefly, if not wholly, to the outward behaviour; to the manner of life. But it is within, before it appears without: it is in the heart, before it is seen in the outward conversation. There must be a dissipated spirit, before there is a dissipated manner of life. But what is dissipation of spirit? This is the first and the grand inquiry

4. God created all things for himself; more especially all intelligent spirits. (And indeed it seems that intelligence, in some kind or degree, is inseparable from spiritual beings; that intelligence is as essential to spirits, as extension is to matter.) He made those more directly for himself, to know, love, and enjoy him. As the sun is the centre of the solar system, so (as far as we may compare material things with spiritual) we need not scruple to affirm, that God is the centre of spirits. And as long as they are united to him, created spirits are at rest: they

are at rest so long, and no longer, as they "attend upon the Lord without distraction."

5. This expression of the apostle, (not to encumber ourselves at present with the particular occasion of his speaking it,) is exceeding peculiar; προς το ευπροσεδρον τω Κυριῳ. The word which we render, *attend upon*, literally means, sitting in a good posture for hearing. And therein St. Paul undoubtedly alluded to Mary sitting at the Master's feet, Luke x, 40. Meantime, Martha was *cumbered*, with much serving; was *distracted, dissipated;* περιεσπατο. It is the very expression, from whence St. Paul takes the word which we render, *without distraction.*

6. And even as much serving dissipated the thoughts of Martha, and distracted her from attending to her Lord's words, so a thousand things which daily occur, are apt to dissipate our thoughts, and distract us from attending to his voice, who is continually speaking to our hearts; I mean, to all that listen to his voice. We are encompassed on all sides with persons and things that tend to draw us from our centre. Indeed every creature, if we are not continually on our guard, will draw us from our Creator. The whole visible world, all we see, hear, or touch, all the objects either of our senses or understanding, have a tendency to dissipate our thoughts from the invisible world, and to distract our minds from attending to him, who is both the Author and End of our being.

7. This is the more easily done, because we are all by nature αθεοι, *Atheists* in the world: and that in so high a degree, that it requires no less than almighty power to counteract that tendency to dissipation, which is in every human spirit, and restore the capacity of attending to God, and fixing itself on him. For this cannot be done till we are new creatures; till we are created anew in Christ Jesus; till the same power which made the world, make us a "clean heart, and renew a right spirit within us."

8. But who is he that is thus renewed? He that believeth in the name of the Son of God. He alone that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ, is thus "born of God." It is by this faith alone, that he is "created anew in [or through] Christ Jesus;" that he is restored to the image of God, wherein he was created, and again centred in God; or, as the apostle expresses it, "joined to the Lord in one spirit." Yet even then the believer may find in himself, the remains of that carnal mind, that natural tendency to rest in created good, to acquiesce in visible things, which, without continual care, will press down his soul, and draw him from his Creator. Herein the world, the men that know not God, will never fail to join; at some times, with design, and at other times, perhaps, without design: for their very spirit is infectious, and insensibly changes ours into its own likeness. And we may well be assured, the prince of this world, the devil, will assist them with all his might. He will labour with all his strength, and what is far more dangerous, with all his subtlety, if, by any means, he may draw us away from our simplicity towards Christ: from our simple adherence to him; from our union with him; through whom we are also united in one spirit to the Father.

9. But nothing is more certain than this: That though he may tempt the strongest believer to give up his simplicity towards Christ, and scatter his thoughts and desires among worldly objects; yet he cannot

force even the weakest: for the grace of God is still sufficient for him. The same grace which at first united him to God, is able to continue that happy union, in spite of all the rage, and all the strength, and all the subtlety of the enemy. God has never left himself without witness, that he has power to deliver them that trust in him, as out of every temptation that can assault them, so out of this in particular. He has still a little flock, who do, in fact, "attend upon him without distraction:" who, cleaving to him with full purpose, are not dissipated from him, no, not for a moment; but "rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in every thing give thanks."

10. But so far as any one yields to this temptation, so far he is *dissipated*. The original word properly signifies to *disperse*, or *scatter*. So the sun dissipates, that is, scatters the clouds; the wind dissipates, or scatters the dust; and, by an easy metaphor, our thoughts are said to be dissipated, when they are irregularly scattered up and down. In like manner, our desires are dissipated, when they are unhinged from God, their proper centre, and scattered to and fro among the poor, perishing, unsatisfying things of the world. And, indeed, it may be said of every man that is a stranger to the grace of God, that all his passions are dissipated:

> "Scattered over all the earth abroad,
> Immeasurably far from God."

11. Distraction, in St. Paul's sense, is nearly allied to, or rather the same with dissipation: consequently, to attend upon the Lord without distraction, is the same as to attend upon the Lord without dissipation. But whenever the mind is unhinged from God, it is so far dissipated or distracted. Dissipation then, in general, may be defined, the uncentering the soul from God. And whatever uncentres the mind from God does properly dissipate us.

12. Hence we may easily learn, what is the proper direct meaning of that common expression, *a dissipated man*. He is a man that is separated from God; that is disunited from his centre: whether this be occasioned by hurry of business, by seeking honour or preferment, or by fondness for diversions, for silly pleasures so called; or for any trifle under the sun. The vulgar, it is true, commonly confine this character to those who are violently attached to women, gaming, drinking; to dancing, balls, races, or the poor childish diversion of "running foxes and hares out of breath." But it equally belongs to the serious fool, who forgets God, by a close attention to any worldly employment, suppose it were of the most elegant, or of the most important kind. A man may be as much dissipated from God, by the study of the mathematics or astronomy, as by fondness for cards or hounds. Whoever is habitually inattentive to the presence and will of his Creator, he is a dissipated man.

13. Hence we may likewise learn, that a dissipated life is not barely that of a powdered beau, of a petit maitre, a gamester, a woman hunter, a play house hunter, a fox hunter, or a shatterbrain of any kind; but the life of an honourable statesman, a gentleman, or a merchant, that is "without God in the world." Agreeably to this, a *dissipated age*, (such as is the present, perhaps beyond all that ever were, at least, that are recorded in history,) is an age wherein God is generally forgotten. And *a dissipated nation*, (such as England is at present, in a

superlative degree,) is a nation, a vast majority of which have not God "in all their thoughts."

14. A plain consequence of these observations is, (what some may esteem a paradox,) that *dissipation*, in the full, general meaning of the word, is the very same thing with *ungodliness*. The name is new; but the thing is, undoubtedly, almost as old as the creation. And this is, at present, the peculiar glory of England, wherein it is not equalled by any nation under heaven. We therefore speak an unquestionable truth when we say, there is not on the face of the earth, another nation, (at least that we ever heard of,) so perfectly *dissipated* and *ungodly;* not only so totally "without God in the world," but so openly setting him at defiance. There never was an age that we read of in history, since Julius Cesar, since Noah, since Adam, wherein dissipation or ungodliness did so generally prevail, both among high and low, rich and poor.

15. But still, blessed be God!

> "All are not lost: there be who faith
> Prefer, and piety to God!"

There are some, I trust more than seven thousand, yea, or ten times that number, in England, who have not yet bowed either their knee or their heart, to the god of this world; who, cleaving close to the God of heaven, are not borne away by the flood, by the general, the almost universal torrent of dissipation or ungodliness. They are not of the mind of gentle Crispus,

> Qui nunquam direxit brachia contra torrentem:

"Who never attempted to swim against the stream." They dare swim against the stream. Each of them can truly say,

> Nec me, qui cætera vincit
> Impetus, et rapido contrarius evehor orbi.

If they cannot turn the tide back, they can at least bear an open testimony against it. They are therefore free from the blood of their ungodly countrymen: it must be upon their own head.

16. But by what means may we avoid the being carried away by the overflowing stream of dissipation? It is not difficult for those who believe the Scripture, to give an answer to this question. Now I really believe the Bible to be the word of God, and on that supposition I answer; the radical cure of all dissipation, is the "faith that worketh by love." If, therefore, you would be free from this evil disease, first, "continue steadfast in the faith;" in that faith which brings "the Spirit of adoption, crying in your heart, Abba, Father;" whereby you are enabled to testify "The life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." By this faith you "see him that is invisible, and set the Lord always before you." Next, "building yourselves up in your most holy faith, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, unto everlasting life." And as long as you walk by this rule, you will be superior to all dissipation.

17. How exactly does this agree (though there is a difference in the expression) with that observation of pious Kempis: "Simplicity and purity are the two wings which lift the soul up to heaven. Simplicity is in the intention, purity in the affection." For what is this but (in

the apostle's language) simple "faith working by love?" By that simplicity you always see God, and by purity you love him. What is it, but having (as one of the ancients speaks) "the loving eye of the soul fixed upon God?" And as long as your soul is in this posture dissipation can have no place.

18. It is with great judgment, therefore, that great and good Bishop Taylor, in his "Rules of Holy Living and Dying," (of whom Bishop Warburton, a person not very prone to commend, used to say, "I have no conception of a greater genius on earth, than Dr. Jeremy Taylor,") premises to all his other rules, those concerning purity of intention. And has he not the authority of our Lord himself so to do? who lays it down as a universal maxim; "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." Singly aim at God: in every step thou takest, eye him alone. Pursue one thing: happiness in knowing, in loving, in serving God. Then shall thy soul be full of light: full of the light of the glory of God; of his glorious love, shining upon thee from the face of Jesus Christ.

19. Can any thing be a greater help to universal holiness, than the continually seeing the light of his glory? It is no wonder, then, that so many wise and good men have recommended, to all who desire to be truly religious, the exercise of the presence of God. But in doing this, some of those holy men seem to have fallen into one mistake: (particularly an excellent writer of our own country, in his letters concerning "The Spirit of Prayer:" they put men wholly unawakened, unconvinced of sin, upon this exercise, at their very entrance into religion: whereas this certainly should not be the first, but rather one of the last things. They should begin with repentance; the knowledge of themselves; of their sinfulness, guilt, and helplessness. They should be instructed next, to seek peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Then let them be taught to retain what they have received; to "walk in the light of his countenance:" yea, to "walk in the light as he is in the light," without any darkness at all; till "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth *them* from all sin."

20. It was from a full conviction of the absolute necessity there is, of a Christian's setting the Lord always before him, that a set of young gentlemen in Oxford, who many years ago, used to spend most of their evenings together, in order to assist each other in working out their salvation, placed that question first, in their scheme of daily self examination; "Have I been *simple* and *recollected* in all I said or did?" Have I been *simple?* That is, setting the Lord always before me, and doing every thing with a single view of pleasing him? *Recollected*, that is, quickly gathering in my scattered thoughts; recovering my simplicity, if I had been in any wise drawn from it, by men or devils, or my own evil heart? By this means they were preserved from dissipation, and were enabled, each of them, to say, "By the grace of God, *this one thing I do;* (at least it is my constant aim,) I see God; I love God; I serve God; I glorify him with my body and with my spirit."

21. The same thing seems to be intended by two uncommon words, which are frequently found in the writings of those pious men, who are usually styled Mystics. I mean, *introversion*, and *extroversion*. "Examine yourselves," says St. Paul to the Corinthians, and in them to the Christians of all ages; "know ye not that Christ is in you

except ye be reprobates?" that is, unbelievers: unable to bear the touchstone of God's word. Now the attending to the voice of Christ within you, is what they term *introversion*. The turning the eye of the mind from him to outward things, they call *extroversion*. By this your thoughts wander from God, and you are properly dissipated: whereas by introversion, you may be always sensible of his loving presence; you continually hearken to whatever it pleases your Lord to say to your heart: and if you continually listen to his inward voice, you will be kept from all dissipation.

22. We may, lastly, learn hence, what judgment to form of what is frequently urged in favour of the English nation, and of the present age; namely, that in other respects, England stands on a level with other nations; and the present age stands upon a level with any of the preceding: only it is allowed we are more *dissipated* than our neighbours; and this age is more dissipated than the preceding ages. Nay, if this is allowed, all is allowed. It is allowed that this nation is worse than any of the neighbouring nations; and that this age is worse, essentially worse, than any of the preceding ages. For as dissipation or ungodliness is the parent of all sin; of all unrighteousness; of unmercifulness, injustice, fraud, perfidy; of every possible evil temper, evil word, or evil action; so it, in effect, comprises them all. Whatsoever things are impure, whatsoever things are of evil report, whatsoever things are unholy; if there be any vice; all these are included in ungodliness, usually termed dissipation. Let not, therefore, any lover of virtue and truth say one word in favour of this monster: let no lover of mankind once open his mouth to extenuate the guilt of it. Abhor it as you would abhor the devil, whose offspring and likeness it is! Abhor it, as you would abhor the extinction of all virtue, and the universal prevalence of an earthly, sensual, devilish spirit; and flee from it as you would flee (if you saw it open before you) from the lake of fire burning with brimstone!

SERMON LXXXV.—*On Friendship with the World.*

"Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever, therefore, desireth to be a friend of the world, is an enemy of God," James iv, 4.

1. THERE is a passage in St. Paul's epistle to the Romans, which has been often supposed to be of the same import with this: "Be not conformed to this world," ch. xii, 2: but it has little or no relation to it; it speaks of quite another thing. Indeed the supposed resemblance arises merely from the use of the word *world*, in both places. This naturally leads us to think, that St. Paul means by *conformity to the world*, the same which St. James means by *friendship with the world:* whereas they are entirely different things, as the words are quite different in the original: (for St. Paul's word is, αιων: St. James's is κοσμος.) However, the words of St. Paul contain an important direction to the children of God. As if he had said, be not conformed to either the wisdom, or the spirit, or the fashions *of the age:* of either the unconverted Jews, or heathens, among whom ye live. You are called to show,

by the whole tenor of your life and conversation, that you are "renewed in the spirit of your mind, after the image of him that created you;" and that your rule is not the example or will of man, but "the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."

2. But it is not strange, that St. James's caution against friendship with the world should be so little understood, even among Christians. For I have not been able to learn that any author, ancient or modern, has wrote upon the subject: no, not (so far as I have observed) for sixteen or seventeen hundred years. Even that excellent writer, Mr. Law, who has treated so well many other subjects, has not, in all his practical treatises, wrote one chapter upon it. No, nor said one word, that I remember, or given one caution against it. I never heard one sermon preached upon it, either before the university or elsewhere. I never was in any company where the conversation turned explicitly upon it, even for one hour.

3. Yet are there very few subjects of so deep importance: few that so nearly concern the very essence of religion, the life of God in the soul; the continuance and increase, or the decay, yea, extinction of it. From the want of instruction in this respect, the most melancholy consequences have followed. These, indeed, have not affected those who were still dead in trespasses and sins; but they have fallen heavy upon many of those who were truly alive to God. They have affected many of those called Methodists in particular; perhaps more than any other people. For want of understanding this advice of the apostle, (I hope rather than from any contempt of it,) many among them are sick; spiritually sick; and many sleep, who were once thoroughly awakened. And it is well if they awake any more till their souls are required of them. It has appeared difficult to me, to account for what I have frequently observed: many who were once greatly alive to God, whose conversation was in heaven, who had their affections on things above, not on things of the earth; though they walked in all the ordinances of God, though they still abounded in good works, and abstained from all known sin, yea, and from the appearance of evil; yet they gradually and insensibly decayed; (like Jonah's gourd, when the worm ate the root of it;) insomuch that they are less alive to God now, than they were ten, twenty, or thirty years ago. But it is easily accounted for, if we observe, that as they increased in goods, they increased in *friendship with the world:* which, indeed, must always be the case, unless the mighty power of God interpose. But in the same proportion as they increased in this, the life of God in their soul decreased.

4. Is it strange that it should decrease, if those words are really found in the oracles of God: "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?" What is the meaning of these words? Let us seriously consider. And may God open the eyes of our understanding; that, in spite of all the mist wherewith the wisdom of the world would cover us, we may discern what is the good and acceptable will of God!

5. Let us first consider, what it is which the apostle here means by *the world.* He does not here refer to this outward frame of things termed in Scripture, heaven and earth; but to the inhabitants of the earth; the children of men; or, at least, the greater part of them. But what part? This is fully determined both by our Lord himself, and by

his beloved disciple. First, by our Lord himself. His words are; "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. And all these things will they do unto you, because they know not him that sent me," John xv, 18, &c. You see here "*the world*" is placed on one side, and *those who* "*are not of the world*," on the other. They whom God has "chosen out of the world;" namely, by "sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth;" are set in direct opposition to those whom he hath not so chosen. Yet again: those "who know not him that sent me," saith our Lord; who know not God; they are "*the world.*"

6. Equally express are the words of the beloved disciple: "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you: we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren," 1 John iii, 13. As if he had said, you must not expect any should love you, but those that have "passed from death unto life." It follows, those that are not passed from death unto life, that are not alive to God, are "*the world.*" The same we may learn from those words in the fifth chapter; verse 19, "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the wicked one." Here "*the world*" plainly means, those that are not of God; and who, consequently, "lie in the wicked one."

7. Those, on the contrary, *are of God*, who love God, or at least "fear him, and keep his commandments." This is the lowest character of those that "are of God;" who are not properly sons, but servants; who depart from evil, and study to do good, and walk in all his ordinances, because they have the fear of God in their heart, and a sincere desire to please him. Fix in your heart, this plain meaning of the terms, "*the world;*" those who do not thus fear God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: it means neither more nor less than this.

8. But, understanding the term in this sense, what kind of friendship may we have with the world? We may, we ought to love them as ourselves; (for they also are included in the word *neighbour;*) to bear them real good will; to desire their happiness, as sincerely as we desire the happiness of our own souls; yea, we are in a sense to honour them, (seeing we are directed by the apostle to "honour all men,") as the creatures of God; nay, as immortal spirits, who are capable of knowing, of loving, and of enjoying him to all eternity. We are to honour them as redeemed by his blood, who "tasted death for every man." We are to bear them tender compassion, when we see them forsaking their own mercies, wandering from the path of life, and hastening to everlasting destruction. We are never willingly to grieve their spirits, or give them any pain; but, on the contrary, to give them all the pleasure we innocently can; seeing we are to "please all men for their good." We are never to aggravate their faults; but willingly to allow all the good that is in them.

9. We may and ought to speak to them on all occasions, in the most kind and obliging manner we can. We ought to speak no evil of them when they are absent; unless it be absolutely necessary; unless it be the only means we know of preventing their doing hurt: otherwise, we are to speak of them with all the respect we can, without transgress-

ing the bounds of truth. We are to behave to them, when present with all courtesy, showing them all the regard we can, without coun tenancing them in sin. We ought to do them all the good that is in our power; all they are willing to receive from us; following herein the example of the universal friend, our Father which is in heaven; who, till they will condescend to receive greater blessings, gives them such as they are willing to accept: "causing his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sending [his] rain on the just and on the unjust."

10. But what kind of friendship is it which we may not have with the world? May we not converse with ungodly men at all? Ought we wholly to avoid their company? By no means: the contrary of this has been allowed already. If we were not to converse with them at all, "we must needs go out of the world." Then we could not show them those offices of kindness, which have been already mentioned. We may, doubtless, converse with them, first, on business; in the various purposes of this life, according to that station therein, wherein the providence of God has placed us: secondly, when courtesy requires it; only we must take great care not to carry it too far: thirdly, when we have a reasonable hope of doing them good. But here too we have an especial need of caution, and of much prayer; otherwise, we may easily burn ourselves, in striving to pluck other brands out of the burning.

11. We may easily hurt our own souls, by sliding into a close attach ment to any of them that know not God. This is the *friendship* which is "enmity with God:" we cannot be too jealous over ourselves, lest we fall into this deadly snare; lest we contract, or ever we are aware, a love of *complacence* or *delight* in them. Then only do we tread upon sure ground, when we can say with the Psalmist, "All my delight is in the saints that are upon earth, and in such as excel in virtue." We should have no *needless conversation* with them. It is our duty and our wisdom, to be no oftener, and no longer with them, than is strictly necessary. And during the whole time, we have need to remember and follow the example of him that said, "I kept my mouth as it were with a bridle, while the ungodly was in my sight." We should enter into no sort of connection with them, farther than is absolutely necessary. When Jehoshaphat forgot this, and formed a connection with Ahab, what was the consequence? He first lost his substance: "The ships" they sent out "were broken at Ezion-geber." And when he was not content with this warning, as well as that of the prophet Micaiah, but would go up with him to Ramoth-gilead, he was on the point of losing his life.

12. Above all, we should tremble at the very thought of entering into a marriage covenant, the closest of all others, with any person who does not love, or at least fear God. This is the most horrid folly, the most deplorable madness, that a child of God could possibly plunge into; as it implies every sort of connection with the ungodly, which a Christian is bound in conscience to avoid. No wonder, then, it is so flatly forbidden of God; that the prohibition is so absolute and peremptory: "Be not unequally yoked with an unbeliever." Nothing can be more express. Especially, if we understand by the word *unbeliever*, one that is so far from being a believer in the gospel sense; from being able to say, "The life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me;" that he has not even the faith of a servant. he does not "fear God and work righteousness."

13. But for what reason is the friendship of the world so absolutely prohibited? Why are we so strictly required to abstain from it? For two general reasons: first, because it is sin in itself: secondly, because it is attended with most dreadful consequences.

First, It is a sin in itself: and, indeed, a sin of no common dye. According to the oracles of God, friendship with the world is no less than spiritual adultery. All who are guilty of it, are addressed by the Holy Ghost in those terms; "Ye adulterers and adulteresses." It is plainly violating of our marriage contract with God; by loving the creature more than the Creator; in flat contradiction to that kind command, "My son, give me thine heart."

14. It is a sin of the most heinous nature, as not only implying ignorance of God, and forgetfulness of him, or inattention to him, but positive "enmity against God." It is openly, palpably such. "Know ye not," says the apostle, can ye possibly be ignorant of this, so plain, so undeniable a truth, "that the friendship of the world is enmity against God?" Nay, and how terrible is the inference which he draws from hence! "Therefore, whosoever will be a friend of the world;" (the words properly rendered are, *whosoever desireth to be a friend of the world;*) of the men who know not God, whether he attain it or not; is, *ipso facto*, constituted an enemy of God. This very *desire*, whether successful or not, gives him a right to that appellation.

15. And as it is a sin, a very heinous sin in itself, so it is attended with the most dreadful consequences. It frequently entangles men again in the commission of those sins, from which "they were clean escaped." It generally makes them "partakers of other men's sins," even those which they do not commit themselves. It gradually abates their abhorrence and dread of sin in general, and thereby prepares them for falling an easy prey to any strong temptation. It lays them open to all those sins of omission, whereof their worldly acquaintance are guilty. It insensibly lessens their exactness in private prayer, in family duty, in fasting, in attending public service, and partaking of the Lord's supper. The indifference of those that are near them, with respect to all these, will gradually influence them: even if they say not one word, (which is hardly to be supposed) to recommend their own practice, yet their example speaks, and is many times of more force than any other language. By this example, they are unavoidably betrayed, and almost continually, into unprofitable, yea, and into uncharitable conversation; till they no longer "set a watch before their mouth, and keep the door of their lips;" till they can join in backbiting, tale bearing, and evil speaking, without any check of conscience; having so frequently grieved the Holy Spirit of God, that he no longer reproves them for it: insomuch that their discourse is not now, as formerly, "seasoned with salt, and meet to minister grace to the hearers."

16. But these are not all the deadly consequences that result from familiar intercourse with unholy men. It not only hinders them from ordering their conversation aright, but directly tends to corrupt the heart. It tends to create or increase in us, all that pride and self sufficiency, all that fretfulness to resent; yea, every irregular passion and wrong disposition which are indulged by their companions. It gently leads them into habitual self indulgence, and unwillingness to

deny themselves; into unreadiness to bear or take up any cross; into a softness and delicacy; into evil shame, and the fear of man, that brings numberless snares. It draws them back into the love of the word; into foolish and hurtful desires; into the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life, till they are swallowed up in them. So that in the end, the last state of these men is far worse than the first.

17. If the children of God will connect themselves with the men of the world, though the latter should not endeavour to make them like themselves, (which is a supposition by no means to be made,) yea, though they should neither design nor desire it; yet they will actually do it, whether they design it, and whether they endeavor it, or no. I know not how to account for it, but it is a real fact, that their very spirit is infectious. While you are near them, you are apt to catch their spirit, whether they will or no. Many physicians have observed, that not only the plague, and putrid or malignant fevers, but almost every disease men are liable to, are more or less infectious. And undoubtedly so are all spiritual diseases: only with great variety. The infection is not so swiftly communicated by some, as it is by others. In either case, the person already diseased, does not desire or design to infect another. The man who has the plague, does not desire or intend to communicate his distemper to you. But you are not therefore safe: so keep at a distance, or you will surely be infected. Does not experience show, that the case is the same with the diseases of the mind? Suppose the proud, the vain, the passionate, the wanton, do not desire or design to infect *you* with their own distempers; yet it is best to keep at a distance from them. You are not safe if you come too near them. You will perceive, (it is well if it be not too late,) that their very breath is infectious. It has been lately discovered, that there is an atmosphere surrounding every human body, which naturally affects every one that comes within the limits of it. Is there not something analagous to this, with regard to a human spirit? If you continue long within their atmosphere, so to speak, you can hardly escape the being infected. The contagion spreads from soul to soul, as well as from body to body, even though the persons diseased do not intend or desire it. But can this reasonably be supposed? Is it not a notorious truth, that men of the world, (exceeding few excepted) eagerly desire to make their companions like themselves? Yea, and use every means, with their utmost skill and industry, to accomplish their desire. Therefore, fly for your life! Do not play with the fire, but escape before the flames kindle upon you.

18. But how many are the pleas for friendship with the world! And how strong are the temptations to it! Such of these as are the most dangerous, and, at the same time, most common, we will consider.

To begin with one that is the most dangerous of all others, and, at the same time, by no means uncommon. "I grant," says one, "the person I am about to marry, is not a religious person. She does not make any pretensions to it. She has little thought about it. But she is a beautiful creature. She is extremely agreeable, and I think will make me a lovely companion."

This is a snare indeed! Perhaps one of the greatest that human nature is liable to. This is such a temptation as no power of man is able

to overcome. Nothing less than the mighty power of God can make a way for you to escape from it. And this can work a complete deliverance: his grace is sufficient for you. But not unless you are a worker together with him: not unless you deny yourself, and take up your cross. And what you do, you must do at once; nothing can be done by degrees. Whatever you do in this important case, must be done at one stroke. If it be done at all, you must at once cut off the right hand, and cast it from you! Here is no time for conferring with flesh and blood. At once, conquer or perish!

19. Let us turn the tables: Suppose a woman that loves God, is addressed by an agreeable man; genteel, lively, entertaining; suitable in all other respects, though not religious; what should she do in such a case? What she *should* do, if she believes the Bible, is sufficiently clear. But what *can* she do? Is not this,

"A test for human frailty too severe?"

Who is able to stand in such a trial? Who can resist such a temptation? None but one that holds fast the shield of faith, and earnestly cries to the strong for strength. None but one that gives herself to watching and prayer, and continues therein with all perseverance. If she does this, she will be a happy witness, in the midst of an unbelieving world, that as "all things are possible with God," so all "things are possible to her that believeth."

20. But either a man or woman may ask, "What, if the person who seeks my acquaintance be a person of a strong natural understanding, cultivated by various learning? May not I gain much useful knowledge by a familiar intercourse with him? May I not learn many things from him, and much improve my own understanding?" Undoubtedly you may improve your own understanding, and you may gain much knowledge. But still, if he has not at least the fear of God, your loss will be far greater than your gain. For you can hardly avoid decreasing in holiness as much as you increase in knowledge. And if you lose one degree of inward or outward holiness, all the knowledge you gain will be no equivalent.

21. "But his fine and strong understanding improved by education, is not his chief recommendation. He has more valuable qualifications than these: he is remarkably good humoured: he is of a compassionate, humane spirit; and has much generosity in his temper" On these very accounts, if he does not fear God, he is infinitely more dangerous. If you converse intimately with a person of this character, you will surely drink into his spirit. It is hardly possible for you to avoid stopping just where he stops. I have found nothing so difficult in all my life, as to converse with men of this kind, (*good sort of men*, as they are commonly called,) without being hurt by them. Oh beware of them! Converse with them just as much as business requires, and no more; otherwise, (though you do not feel any present harm, yet,) by slow and imperceptible degrees, they will attach you again to earthly things, and damp the life of God in your soul.

22. It may be, the persons who are desirous of your acquaintance; though they are not experienced in religion, yet understand it well, so that you frequently reap advantage from their conversation. If this be really the case, (as I have known a few instances of the kind,) it seems

you may converse with them; only very sparingly and very cautiously: otherwise you will lose more of your spiritual life, than all the knowledge you gain is worth.

23. "But the persons in question are useful to me, in carrying on my temporal business. Nay, on many occasions, they are necessary to me; so that I could not well carry it on without them." Instances of this kind frequently occur. And this is doubtless a sufficient reason for having some intercourse, perhaps frequently, with men that do not fear God. But even this is by no means a reason for your contracting an intimate acquaintance with them. And you here need to take the utmost care, "lest even by that converse with them which is necessary, while your fortune in the world increases, the grace of God should decrease in your soul."

24. There may be one more plausible reason given for some intimacy with an unholy man. You may say, "I have been helpful to him. I have assisted him when he was in trouble: and he remembers it with gratitude. He esteems and loves *me*, though he does not love God. Ought I not then to love *him?* Ought I not to return love for love? Do not even heathens and publicans so?" I answer, you should certainly return love for love; but it does not follow, that you should have any intimacy with him. That would be at the peril of your soul. Let your love give itself vent in constant and fervent prayer: wrestle with God for him. But let your love for him not carry you so far, as to weaken, if not destroy your own soul.

25. "But must I not be intimate with my relations; and that, whether they fear God or not? Has not his providence recommended these to me?" Undoubtedly it has: but there are relations, nearer or more distant. The nearest relations are husbands and wives. As these have taken each other for better for worse, they must make the best of each other; seeing as God has joined them together, none can put them asunder; unless in case of adultery: or when the life of one or the other is in imminent danger. Parents are almost as nearly connected with their children. You cannot part with them while they are young; it being your duty to "train them up" with all care, "in the way wherein they should go." How frequently you should converse with them when they are grown up, is to be determined by Christian prudence. This also will determine, how long it is expedient for children, if it be at their own choice, to remain with their parents. In general, if they do not fear God, you should leave them as soon as is convenient. But wherever you are, take care, (if it be in your power,) that they do not want the necessaries or conveniences of life. As for all other relations, even brothers or sisters, if they are of the world, you are under no obligation to be intimate with them: you may be civil and friendly at a distance.

26. But allowing that "the friendship of the world is enmity against God," and consequently that it is the most excellent way, indeed the only way to heaven, to avoid all intimacy with worldly men; yet who has resolution to walk therein? Who even of those that love or fear God? For these only are concerned in the present question. A few I have known, who, even in this respect, were lights in a benighted land: who did not and would not either contract or continue any acquaintance with persons of the most refined and improved understand-

ing and the most engaging tempers, merely because they were of the world; because they were not alive to God: yea, though they were capable of improving them in knowledge, or of assisting them in business: nay, though they admired and esteemed them for that very religion, which they did not themselves experience: a case one would hardly think possible, but of which there are many instances at this day. Familiar intercourse even with these, they steadily and resolutely refrain from, for conscience' sake.

27. Go thou and do likewise, whosoever thou art, that art a child of God by faith! Whatever it cost, flee spiritual adultery! Have no friendship with the world. However tempted thereto by profit or pleasure, contract no intimacy with worldly minded men. And if thou hast contracted any such already, break it off without delay. Yea, if thy ungodly friend be dear to thee as a right eye, or useful as a right hand, yet confer not with flesh and blood, but pluck out the right eye, cut off the right hand, and cast them from thee! It is not an indifferent thing. Thy life is at stake: eternal life or eternal death. And is it not better to go into life, having one eye or one hand, than having both, to be cast into hell fire? When thou knewest no better, the times of ignorance God winked at. But now thine eyes are opened, now the light is come, walk in the light! Touch not pitch, lest thou be defiled. At all events, "keep thyself pure!"

28. But whatever others do, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, hear this, all ye that are called Methodists! However importuned or tempted thereto, have no friendship with the world. Look round, and see the melancholy effects it has produced among your brethren! How many of the mighty are fallen! How many have fallen by this very thing! They would take no warning: they *would* converse, and that intimately, with earthly minded men, till they "measured back their steps to earth again!" Oh "come out from among them!" from all unholy men, however harmless they may appear; "and be ye separate:" at least, so far as to have no intimacy with them. As your "fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ," so let it be with those, and those only, who at least seek the Lord Jesus in sincerity. So "shall ye be," in a peculiar sense, "my sons and my daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

SERMON LXXXVI.—*In what Sense we are to Leave the World.*

"Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the LORD, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

"And I will be to you a Father, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty," 2 Cor. vi, 17, 18.

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1. How exceeding few in the religious world have duly considered these solemn words! We have read them over and over, but never laid them to heart, or observed that they contain as plain and express a command as any in the whole Bible. And it is to be feared, there are still fewer that understand the genuine meaning of this direction. Numberless persons in England have interpreted it as a command to come out of the established church. And in the same sense it has been

understood by thousands in the neighbouring kingdoms. Abundance of sermons have been preached, and of books wrote, upon this supposition. And indeed many pious men have grounded their separation from the church, chiefly on this text. "God himself," say they, "commands us, 'Come out from among them, and be ye separate.' And it is only upon this condition that he will *receive* us, and we shall be the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty."

2. But this interpretation is totally foreign to the design of the apostle, who is not here speaking of this or that church, but on quite another subject. Neither did the apostle himself, or any of his brethren, draw any such inference from the words. Had they done so, it would have been a flat contradiction, both to the example and precept of their Master. For although the Jewish church was then full as *unclean*, as unholy, both inwardly and outwardly, as any Christian church now upon earth, yet our Lord constantly attended the service of it. And he directed his followers in this as in every other respect, to tread in his steps. This is clearly implied in that remarkable passage; "The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: all, therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do: but do not ye after their works; for they say and do not," Matt. xxiii, 1. Even though they *themselves say and do not;* though their lives contradict their doctrines; though they were ungodly men; yet our Lord here not only permits, but requires his disciples to hear them. For he requires them to "observe and do what they say:" but this could not be, if they did not hear them. Accordingly the apostles, as long as they were at Jerusalem, constantly attended the public service. Therefore it is certain, these words have no reference to a separation from the established church.

3. Neither have they reference to the direction given by the apostle, in his first epistle to the Corinthians. The whole passage runs thus: "I wrote unto you in an epistle, not to company with fornicators. Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world; or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters: for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you, not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one, no not to eat," chap. v, 9–11. This wholly relates to them that are members of the same Christian community. The apostle tells them expressly, he does not give this direction, not to company with such and such persons, with regard to the heathens, or to men in general: and adds this plain reason; "For then must ye needs go out of the world:" you could transact no business in it. "But if any man that is called a brother;" that is connected with you in the same religious society; "be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one, no not to eat." How important a caution is this! But how little is it observed, even by those that are, in other respects, conscientious Christians! Indeed some parts of it are not easy to be observed; for a plain reason: they are not easy to be understood. I mean, it is not easy to be understood, to whom the characters belong. It is very difficult, for instance, to know, unless in some glaring cases, to whom the character of an *extortioner*, or of a *covetous* man, belongs. We can hardly know one or the other, without seeming at least, to be "busy bodies in other men's matters." And yet the prohibition is as

strong concerning converse with these, as with fornicators or adulterers We can only act in the simplicity of our hearts, without setting up for infallible judges, (still willing to be better informed,) according to the best light we have.

But although this direction relates only to our Christian brethren; (such, at least, by outward profession;) that in the text is of a far wider extent: it unquestionably relates to all mankind. It clearly requires us, to keep at a distance, as far as is practicable, from all ungodly men. Indeed it seems, the word which we render *unclean thing*, τα ακαθαρτου, might rather be rendered *unclean person;* probably alluding to the ceremonial law, which forbade *touching* one that was legally unclean. But even here, were we to understand the expression literally, were we to take the words in the strictest sense, the same absurdity would follow; we must needs, as the apostle speaks, "go out of the world:" we should not be able to abide in those callings, which the providence of God has assigned us. Were we not to converse at all with men of those characters, it would be impossible to transact our temporal business. So that every conscientious Christian would have nothing to do, but to flee into the desert. It would not suffice, to turn recluses; to shut ourselves up in monasteries or nunneries; for even then we must have some intercourse with ungodly men, in order to procure the necessaries of life.

5. The words, therefore, must necessarily be understood with considerable restriction. They do not prohibit our conversing with any man, good or bad, in the way of worldly business. A thousand occasions will occur, whereon we must converse with them in order to transact those affairs which cannot be done without them. And some of these may require us to have frequent intercourse with drunkards, or fornicators: yea, sometimes it may be requisite for us to spend a considerable time in their company: otherwise we should not be able to fulfil the duties of our several callings. Such conversation, therefore, with men, holy or unholy, is no way contrary to the apostle's advice.

6. What is it then which the apostle forbids? First, the conversing with ungodly men, when there is no necessity, no providential call, no business, that requires it: secondly, the conversing with them more frequently than business necessarily requires: thirdly, the spending more time in their company than is necessary to finish our business: above all, fourthly, the choosing ungodly persons, however ingenious or agreeable, to be our ordinary companions; or to be our familiar friends. If any instance of this kind will admit of less excuse than others, it is that which the apostle expressly forbids elsewhere: the being "unequally yoked with an unbeliever" in marriage: with any person that has not the love of God in their heart; or at least the fear of God before their eyes. I do not know any thing that can justify this: neither the sense, wit, or beauty of the person; nor temporal advantage; nor fear of want; no, nor even the command of a parent. For if any parent command what is contrary to the word of God, the child ought to obey God rather than man.

7. The ground of this prohibition is laid down at large in the preceding verses. "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? What communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an unbeliever?" (Taking that word in the extensive sense, for him that hath

neither the love nor fear of God.) "Ye are the temple of the living God as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them: and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." It follows, "Wherefore, come out from among them;" the unrighteous, the children of darkness, the sons of Belial, the unbelievers; "and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing," or person, "and I will receive you."

8. Here is the ground of this prohibition, to have any more intercourse with unholy men than is absolutely necessary. There can be no profitable *fellowship* between the righteous and the unrighteous; as there can be *no communion* between light and darkness: (whether you understand this of natural or spiritual darkness.) As Christ can have *no concord* with *Belial;* so a believer in him can have no concord with an unbeliever. It is absurd to imagine, that any true union or concord should be between two persons, while one of them remains in the darkness, and the other walks in the light. They are subjects, not only of two separate, but of two opposite kingdoms. They act upon quite different principles: they aim at quite different ends. It will necessarily follow, that frequently, if not always, they will walk in different paths. How can they walk together, till they are agreed?—until they both serve either Christ or Belial?

9. And what are the consequences of our not obeying this direction? Of our not coming out from among unholy men? Of not being separate from them, but contracting or continuing a familiar intercourse with them? It is probable, it will not immediately have any apparent, visible ill consequences. It is hardly to be expected, that it will immediately lead us into any outward sin. Perhaps it may not presently occasion our neglect of any outward duty. It will first sap the foundations of religion: it will, by little and little, damp our zeal for God; it will gently cool that fervency of spirit, which attended our first love. If they do not openly oppose any thing we say or do, yet their very spirit will, by insensible degrees, affect our spirit, and transfuse into it the same lukewarmness and indifference towards God and the things of God. It will weaken all the springs of our soul; destroy the vigour of our spirit; and cause us more and more to slacken our pace, in running the race that is set before us.

10. By the same degrees all needless intercourse with unholy men will weaken our divine evidence and conviction of things unseen: it will dim the eyes of the soul whereby we see him that is invisible, and weaken our confidence in him. It will gradually abate our "taste of the powers of the world to come;" and deaden that hope, which before made us "sit in heavenly places with Christ Jesus." It will imperceptibly cool that flame of love, which before enabled us to say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee!" Thus it strikes at the root of all vital religion; of our fellowship with the Father and with the Son.

11. By the same degrees, and in the same secret and unobserved manner, it will prepare us to "measure back our steps to earth again." It will lead us softly, to relapse into the love of the world from which we were clean escaped; to fall gently into *the desire of the flesh;* the seeking happiness in the pleasures of sense;—*the desire of the eye;* the seeking happiness in the pleasures of imagination;—*and the pride of life;* the seeking it in pomp, in riches, or in the praise of man. And all this may

be done, by the assistance of the spirit, who "beguiled Eve through his subtilty;" before we are sensible of his attack, or are conscious of any loss.

12. And it is not only the love of the world in all its branches, which necessarily steals upon us, while we converse with men of a worldly spirit, farther than duty requires; but every other evil passion and temper, of which the human soul is capable: in particular, pride, vanity, censoriousness, evil surmising, proneness to revenge; while on the other hand, levity, gayety, and dissipation, steal upon us and increase continually. We know how all these abound in the men that know not God. And it cannot be but they will insinuate themselves into all who frequently and freely converse with them: they insinuate most deeply into those who are not apprehensive of any danger: and most of all, if they have any particular affection, if they have more love than duty requires for those who do not love God, with whom they familiarly converse.

13. Hitherto I have supposed that the persons with whom you converse, are such as we use to call *good sort of people:* such as are styled, in the cant term of the day, men of *worthy* characters: (one of the most silly, insignificant words, that ever came into fashion.) I have supposed them to be free from cursing, swearing, profaneness; from sabbath breaking and drunkenness; from lewdness either in word or action; from dishonesty, lying, and slandering: in a word, to be entirely clear from open vice of every kind. Otherwise, whoever has even the fear of God, must in any wise keep at a distance from them. But I am afraid I have made a supposition which hardly can be admitted. I am afraid, some of the persons with whom you converse more than business necessarily requires, do not deserve even the character of *good sort of men;* are not *worthy* of any thing but shame and contempt. Do not some of them live in open sin? in cursing and swearing, drunkenness, or uncleanness? You cannot long be ignorant of this; for they take little pains to hide it. Now is it not certain, all vice is of an infectious nature? for who can touch pitch and not be defiled? From these, therefore, you ought undoubtedly to flee as from the face of a serpent. Otherwise, how soon may "evil communication corrupt good manners!"

14. I have supposed, likewise, that those unholy persons with whom you frequently converse, have no desire to communicate their own spirit to *you*, or to induce *you* to follow their example. But this also is a supposition which can hardly be admitted. In many cases their interest may be advanced by your being a partaker of their sins. But supposing interest to be out of the question, does not every man naturally desire, and more or less endeavour, to bring over his acquaintance to his own opinion or party? So that, as all good men desire and endeavour to make others good, like themselves, in like manner, all bad men desire and endeavour to make their companions as bad as themselves.

15. But if they do not, if we allow this almost impossible supposition, that they do not desire or use any endeavours, to bring you over to their own temper and practice; still it is dangerous to converse with them. I speak, not only of openly vicious men, but of all that do not love God, or at least fear him, and sincerely "seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness." Admit, such companions do not endeavour to make you like themselves; does this prove you are in no danger from them? See that poor wretch that is ill of the plague! He does

not desire, he does not use the least endeavour, to communicate his distemper to you. Yet have a care! touch him not! nay, go not near him, or you know not how soon you may be in the same condition. To draw the parallel: though we should suppose a man of the world does not desire, design, or endeavour to communicate his distemper to you, yet touch him not. Come not too near him. For it is not only his reasonings or persuasions, that may infect your soul, but his very breath is infectious; particularly to those who are apprehensive of no danger.

16. If conversing freely with worldly minded men has no other ill effect upon you, it will surely, by imperceptible degrees, make you less heavenly minded. It will give a bias to your mind, which will continually draw your soul to earth. It will incline you, without your being conscious of it, instead of being wholly transformed in the renewing of your mind, to be again conformed to this world, in its spirit, in its maxims, and in its vain conversation. You will fall again into that levity and dissipation of spirit, from which you had before clean escaped; into that superfluity of apparel, and into that foolish, frothy, unprofitable conversation, which was an abomination to you, when your soul was alive to God. And you will daily decline from that simplicity both of speech and behaviour, whereby you once adorned the doctrine of God our Saviour.

17. And if you go thus far in conformity to the world, it is hardly to be expected you will stop here. You will go farther in a short time: having once lost your footing and begun to slide down, it is a thousand to one, you will not stop till you come to the bottom of the hill: till you fall yourself into some of those outward sins, which your companions commit before your eyes, or in your hearing. Hereby the dread and horror which struck you at first, will gradually abate, till at length you are prevailed upon to follow their example. But suppose they do not lead you into outward sin, if they infect your spirit with pride, anger, or love of the world, it is enough: it is sufficient, without deep repentance, to drown your soul in everlasting perdition; seeing (abstracted from all outward sin,) "to be carnally minded is death."

18. But as dangerous as it is to converse familiarly with men that know not God, it is more dangerous still for men to converse with women of that character; as they are generally more insinuating than men, and have far greater power of persuasion; particularly if they are agreeable in their persons, or pleasing in their conversation. You must be more than man, if you can converse with such and not suffer any loss. If you do not feel any foolish or unholy desire; (and who can promise that you shall not?) yet it is scarce possible, that you should not feel more or less of an improper softness, which will make you less willing and less able, to persist in that habit of denying yourself, and taking up your cross daily, which constitute the character of a good soldier of Jesus Christ. And we know that not only fornicators and adulterers, but even "the soft and effeminate," the delicate followers of a self deny ing Master, "shall have no part in the kingdom of Christ and of God."

19. Such are the consequences which must surely, though perhaps slowly, follow the mixing of the children of God with the men of the world. And by this means, more than by any other, yea, than by all others put together, are the people called Methodists likely to lose their strength, and become like other men. It is indeed with a good

design, and from a real desire of promoting the glory of God, that many of them admit of a familiar conversation with men that know not God. You have a hope of awakening them out of sleep, and persuading them to seek the things that make for their peace. But if, after a competent time of trial, you can make no impression upon them, it will be your wisdom to give them up to God; otherwise you are more likely to receive hurt from them, than to do them any good. For if you do not raise their hearts up to heaven, they will draw yours down to earth. Therefore retreat in time, "and come out from among them, and be ye separate."

20. But how may this be done? What is the most easy and effectual method of separating ourselves from unholy men? Perhaps a few advices will make this plain to those that desire to know and do the will of God.

First: Invite no unholy person to your house, unless on some very particular occasion. You may say, "but civility requires this; and sure, religion is no enemy to civility. Nay, the apostle himself directs us to *be courteous*, as well as to be *pitiful*." I answer, you may be civil, sufficiently civil, and yet keep them at a proper distance. You may be courteous in a thousand instances, and yet stand aloof from them. And it was never the design of the apostle to recommend any such courtesy as must necessarily prove a snare to the soul.

21. Secondly: On no account accept any invitation from an unholy person: never be prevailed upon to pay a visit unless you wish it to be repaid. It may be, a person, desirous of your acquaintance, will repeat the visit twice or thrice. But if you steadily refrain from returning it, the visitant will soon be tired. It is not improbable, he will be disobliged; and perhaps he will show some marks of resentment. Lay your account with this, that when any thing of the kind occurs, you may neither be surprised nor discouraged. It is better to please God and displease man, than to please man and displease God.

22. Thirdly: It is probable, you were acquainted with men of the world, before you yourself knew God. What is best to be done with regard to these? How may you most easily drop their acquaintance? First, allow a sufficient time to try, whether you cannot, by argument and persuasion, applied at the soft times of address, induce them to choose the better part. Spare no pains! Exert all your faith and love, and wrestle with God in their behalf. If, after all, you cannot perceive that any impression is made upon them, it is your duty gently to withdraw from them, that you be not entangled with them. This may be done in a short time, easily and quietly, by not returning their visits. But you must expect they will upbraid you with haughtiness and unkindness, if not to your face, yet behind your back. And this you can suffer for a good conscience. It is, properly, the reproach of Christ.

23. When it pleased God to give *me* a settled resolution, to be not a *nominal*, but a *real* Christian, (being then about twenty-two years of age,) my acquaintance were as ignorant of God as myself. But there was this difference: I knew my own ignorance; they did not know theirs. I faintly endeavoured to help them, but in vain. Meantime I found, by sad experience, that even their *harmless* conversation, so called, damped all my good resolutions. But how to get rid of them was the question which I resolved in my mind again and again. I saw no possible way, unless it should please God to remove me to another

college. He did so, in a manner utterly contrary to all human probability. I was elected fellow of a college, where I knew not one person. I foresaw, abundance of people would come to see me, either out of friendship, civility, or curiosity; and that I should have offers of acquaintance, new and old: but I had now fixed my plan. Entering now, as it were, into a new world, I resolved to have no acquaintance by chance, but by choice; and to choose such only, as I had reason to believe would help me on my way to heaven. In consequence of this, I narrowly observed the temper and behaviour of all that visited me. I saw no reason to think that the greater part of these truly loved or feared God. Such acquaintance, therefore, I did not choose: I could not expect they would do me any good. Therefore, when any of these came to see me, I behaved as courteously as I could. But to the question, "When will you come to see me?" I returned no answer. When they had come a few times, and found I still declined returning the visit, I saw them no more. And I bless God, this has been my invariable rule for about threescore years. I knew many reflections would follow: but that did not move me; as I knew full well, it was my calling to go "through evil report and good report."

24. I earnestly advise all of you who resolve to be, not *almost, but altogether Christians*, to adopt the same plan; however contrary it may be to flesh and blood. Narrowly observe, which of those that fall in your way, are like minded with yourself: who among them have you reason to believe fears God and works righteousness? Set them down as worthy of your acquaintance: gladly and freely converse with them at all opportunities. As to all who do not answer that character, gently and quietly let them drop. However good natured and sensible they may be, they will do you no real service. Nay, if they did not lead you into outward sin, yet they would be a continual clog to your soul, and would hinder your running with vigour and cheerfulness the race that is set before you. And if any of your friends, that did once run well, "turn back from the holy commandment once delivered to them;" first use every method that prudence can suggest, to bring them again into the good way. But if you cannot prevail, let them go; only still commending them unto God in prayer. Drop all familiar intercourse with them, and save your own soul.

25. I advise you, fourthly, walk circumspectly with regard to your relations. With your parents, whether religious or not, you must certainly converse, if they desire it; and with your brothers and sisters: more especially, if they want your service. I do not know that you are under any such obligation, with respect to your more distant relations. Courtesy, indeed, and natural affection may require that you should visit them sometimes. But if they neither know nor seek God, it should certainly be as seldom as possible. And when you are with them, you should not stay a day longer than decency requires. Again: Whichsoever of them you are with at any time, remember that solemn caution of the apostle, "Let no corrupt communication [conversation] come out of your mouth: but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers." You have no authority to vary from this rule; otherwise, you "grieve the Holy Spirit of God." And if you keep closely to it, those who have no religion will soon dispense with your company

26. Thus it is that those who fear or love God should "come out from among all" that do not fear him. Thus in a plain scriptural sense, you should "be separate" from them; from all unnecessary intercourse with them. Yea, "Touch not," saith the Lord, "the unclean thing," or person, any farther than necessity requires; "and I will receive you" into the household of God. "And I will be unto you a Father;" will embrace you with paternal affection; "and ye shall be unto me sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." The promise is express to all that renounce the company of ungodly men; provided their spirit and conversation are, in other respects, also suitable to their duty. God does here absolutely engage to give them all the blessings he has prepared for his beloved children, both in time and eternity. Let all those, therefore, who have any regard for the favour and the blessings of God, first, beware, how they contract any acquaintance, or form any connection with ungodly men; any farther than necessary business, or some other providential call requires: and, secondly, with all possible speed, all that the nature of the thing will admit, break off all such acquaintance already contracted, and all such connections already formed. Let no pleasure resulting from such acquaintance, no gain found or expected from such connections, be of any consideration, when laid in the balance against a clear, positive command of God. In such a case, "pluck out the right eye;" tear away the most pleasing acquaintance; "and cast it from thee:" give up all thought, all design of seeking it again. "Cut off the right hand;" absolutely renounce the most profitable connection; "and cast it from thee." "It is better for thee to enter into life with one eye," or one hand, "than having two, to be cast into hell fire."

Sermon LXXXVII.—*On Temptation.*

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: And God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it," 1 Cor. x, 13.

1. In the foregoing part of the chapter, the apostle has been reciting, on the one hand, the unparalleled mercies of God to the Israelites; and, on the other, the unparalleled ingratitude of that disobedient and gainsaying people. And all these things, as the apostle observes, "were written for our ensample;" that we might take warning from them, so as to avoid their grievous sins, and escape that terrible punishment. He then adds that solemn and important caution: "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

2. But if we observe these words attentively, will there not appear a considerable difficulty in them? "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." If a man only *thinks he stands*, he is in no danger of falling. It is not possible that any one should fall, if he only *thinks he stands*. The same difficulty occurs, according to our translation, in those well known words of our Lord; (the importance of which we may easily learn from their being repeated in the gospel no less than eight times;) "To him that hath shall be given; but from

him that hath not, shall be taken away even what he seemeth to have." "That which he *seemeth to have!*" Nay, if he only *seems to have it*, it is impossible it should be taken away. None can take away from another what he only *seems to have*. What a man only seems to have, he cannot possibly lose. This difficulty, may, at first, appear impossible to be surmounted. It is really so: it cannot be surmounted, if the common translation be allowed. But if we observe the proper meaning of the original word, the difficulty vanishes away. It may be allowed that the word δοκει does (sometimes at least, in some authors) mean no more than *to seem*. But I much doubt whether it ever bears that meaning, in any part of the inspired writings. By a careful consideration of every text in the New Testament, wherein this word occurs, I am fully convinced, that it no where lessens, but every where strengthens the sense of the word to which it is annexed. Accordingly ο δοκει εχειν, does not mean, *what he seems to have;* but on the contrary, *what he assuredly hath*. And so ο δοκων εσαναι, not *he that seemeth to stand*, or he that *thinketh he standeth*, but *he that assuredly standeth:* he who standeth so fast, that he does not appear to be in any danger of falling: he that saith, like David, "I shall never be moved: thou, Lord, hast made my hill so strong." Yet at that very time thus saith the Lord, "Be not high minded, but fear. Else shalt thou be cut off:" else shalt thou also be moved from thy steadfastness. The strength which thou assuredly hast shall be taken away. As firmly as thou didst really stand, thou wilt fall into sin, if not into hell.

3. But lest any should be discouraged by the consideration of those who once ran well, and were afterwards overcome by temptation; lest the fearful of heart should be utterly cast down, supposing it impossible for them to stand; the apostle subjoins to that serious exhortation, these comfortable words: "There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

I. 1. Let us begin with the observation which ushers in this comfortable promise: "There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man." Our translators seem to have been sensible that this expression, *common to man*, does by no means reach the force of the original word. Hence they substitute another in the margin, *moderate*. But this seems to be less significant than the other, and farther from the meaning of it. Indeed it is not easy to find any word in the English tongue, which answers the word ανθρωπινος. I believe the sense of it can only be expressed by some such circumlocution as this: "Such as is suited to the nature and circumstances of man; such as every man may reasonably expect, if he considers the nature of his body and his soul, and his situation in the present world." If we duly consider these, we shall not be surprised at any temptation that hath befallen us: seeing it is no other than such a creature, in such a situation, has all reason to expect.

2. Consider, first, the nature of that body with which your soul is connected. How many are the evils which it is every day, every hour, liable to! Weakness, sickness, and disorders of a thousand kinds, are its natural attendants. Consider the inconceivably minute fibres, threads, abundantly finer than hair, (called from thence capillary

vessels,) whereof every part of it is composed; consider the innumerable multitude of equally fine pipes and strainers, all filled with circulating juice! And will not the breach of a few of these fibres, or the obstruction of a few of these tubes, particularly in the brain, or heart, or lungs, destroy our ease, health, strength, if not life itself? Now if we observe that all pain implies temptation, how numberless must the temptations be, which will beset every man, more or less, sooner or later, while he dwells in this corruptible body!

3. Consider, secondly, the present state of the soul, as long as it inhabits the house of clay. I do not mean, in its unregenerate state; while it lies in darkness and the shadow of death; under the dominion of the prince of darkness, without hope, and without God in the world: no: look upon men who are raised above that deplorable state. See those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious. Yet still how weak is their understanding! How limited its extent! How confused, how inaccurate are our apprehensions, of even the things that are around about us! How liable are the wisest of men to mistake!—To form false judgments.—To take falsehood for truth, and truth for falsehood.—Evil for good, and good for evil. What starts, what wanderings of imagination, are we continually subject to! And how many are the temptations which we have to expect, even from these innocent infirmities!

4. Consider, thirdly, what is the present situation of even those that fear God. They dwell in the ruins of a disordered world, among men that know not God, that care not for him, and whose heart is fully set in them to do evil. How many are forced to cry out, "Wo is me, that I am constrained to dwell with Mesech: to have my habitations among the tents of Kedar!" among the enemies of God and man. How immensely out-numbered are those that would do well, by them that neither fear God, nor regard man! And how striking is Cowley's observation: "If a man that was armed cap-a-pie, was closed in by a thousand naked Indians, their number would give them such advantage over him, that it would be scarce possible for him to escape. What hope then would there be for a naked, unarmed man to escape, who was surrounded by a thousand armed men!" Now this is the case of every good man. He is not armed either with force or fraud, and is turned out naked as he is, among thousands that are armed with the whole armour of Satan, and provided with all the weapons which the prince of this world can supply out of the armoury of hell. If then he is not destroyed, yet how must a good man be tempted in the midst of this evil world!

5. But is it only from wicked men that temptations arise to them that fear God? It is very natural to imagine this: and almost every one thinks so. Hence how many of us have said in our hearts. "Oh! if my lot were but cast among good men, among those that loved or even feared God, I should be free from all these temptations." Perhaps you would: probably you would not find the same sort of temptations which you have now to encounter. But you would surely meet with temptations of some other kind, which you would find equally hard to bear. For even good men, in general, though sin has not dominion over them, yet are not freed from the remains of it. They have still the remains of an evil heart, ever prone to "depart from the living God." They have the seeds of pride, of anger, of foolish desire; indeed, of

every unholy temper. And any of these, if they do not continually watch and pray, may, and naturally will, spring up, and trouble not themselves only, but all that are round about them. We must not, therefore, depend upon finding no temptation, from those that fear, yea, in a measure, love God. Much less must we be surprised, if some of those who once loved God in sincerity, should lay greater temptations in our way than many of those that never knew him.

6. "But can we expect to find any temptation from those that are *perfected in love?*" This is an important question, and deserves a particular consideration. I answer, first, you may find every kind of temptation, from those who *suppose* they are perfected, when indeed they are not: and so you may, secondly, from those who once really were so, but are now moved from their steadfastness. And if you are not aware of this, if you think they are still what they were once, the temptation will be harder to bear. Nay, thirdly, even those who "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made them free;" who are now really perfect in love; may still be an occasion of temptation to *you:* for they are still encompassed with infirmities. They may be dull of apprehension; they may have a natural heedlessness, or a treacherous memory; they may have too lively an imagination: and any of these may cause little improprieties, either in speech or behaviour, which, though not sinful in themselves, may try all the grace you have: especially if you impute to perverseness of will, (as it is very natural to do,) what is really owing to defect of memory, or weakness of understanding; if these appear to you to be voluntary mistakes, which are really involuntary. So proper was the answer which a saint of God (now in Abraham's bosom) gave me some years ago, when I said, "Jenny, surely now your mistress and you can neither of you be a trial to the other, as God has saved you both from sin:" "Oh sir," said she, "if we are saved from sin, we still have infirmities enough to try all the grace that God has given us."

7. But besides evil men, do not evil spirits also continually surround us on every side? Do not Satan and his angels continually go about, seeking whom they may devour? Who is out of the reach of their malice and subtilty? Not the wisest or the best of the children of men. "The servant is not above his Master." If then they tempted him, will they not tempt us also? Yea, it may be, should God see good to permit, more or less, to the end of our lives. "No temptation," therefore, "hath taken us," which we had not reason to expect, either from our body or soul; either from evil spirits or evil men; yea, or even from good men, till our spirits return to God that gave them.

II. 1. Meantime what a comfort it is to know, with the utmost certainty, that "God is faithful, who will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able." He knoweth what our ability is, and cannot be mistaken. "He knoweth (precisely) whereof we are made: he remembereth that we are but dust." And he will suffer no temptation to befall us, but such as is proportioned to our strength. Not only his justice requires this, which could not punish us for not resisting any temptation, if it were so disproportioned to our strength, that it was impossible for us to resist it; not only his mercy, that tender mercy which is over us, as well as over all his works;—but, above all, his faithfulness: seeing all his words are faithful and true; and the whole

tenor of his promises altogether agrees with that declaration, "As thy days, so thy strength shall be."

2. In that execrable slaughter house, the Romish inquisition, (most unfortunately called, the house of mercy!) it is the custom of those holy butchers, while they are tearing a man's sinews upon the rack, to have the physician of the house standing by. His business is, from time to time, to observe the eyes, the pulse, and other circumstances of the sufferer, and to give notice, when the torture has continued so long as it can, without putting an end to his life; that it may be preserved long enough for him to undergo the residue of their tortures. But notwithstanding all the physician's care, he is sometimes mistaken; and death puts a period to the sufferings of the patient before his tormentors are aware. We may observe something like this in our own case. In whatever sufferings or temptations we are, our great Physician never departs from us. He is about our bed, and about our path. He observes every symptom of our distress, that it may not rise above our strength. And he cannot be mistaken concerning us. He knows the souls and bodies which he has given us. He sees exactly how much we can endure with our present degree of strength. And if this is not sufficient, he can increase it, to whatever degree it pleases him. Nothing, therefore, is more certain, than that, in consequence of his wisdom, as well as his justice, mercy, and faithfulness, he never will, he never can suffer us to be tempted above that we are able: above the strength which he either hath given already, or will give as soon as we need it.

III. 1. "He will with the temptation also," (this is the third point we are to consider,) "make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it."

The word ἔκβασιν, which we render *a way to escape*, is extremely significant. The meaning of it is nearly expressed by the English word *out-let;* but more exact by the old word *out-gate*, still frequently used by the Scottish writers. It literally means *a way out.* And this God will either find or make; which he that hath all wisdom, as well as all power in heaven and earth, can never be at a loss how to do.

2. Either he *makes a way to escape* out of the temptation, by removing the occasion of it, or *in the temptation:* that is, the occasion remaining as it was, it is a temptation no longer. First: He makes a way to escape out of the temptation, by removing the occasion of it. The histories of mankind, of the church in particular, afford us numberless instances of this. And many have occurred in our own memory, and within the little circle of our acquaintance. One of many I think it worth while to relate, as a memorable instance of the faithfulness of God, in making a way to escape out of temptation:—Elizabeth Chadsey, then living in London, (whose daughter is living at this day, and is no dishonour to her parent,) was advised to administer to her husband, who was supposed to leave much substance behind him. But when a full inquiry into his circumstances was made, it appeared that this supposition was utterly destitute of foundation; and that he not only left nothing at all behind him, but also was very considerably in debt. It was not long after his burial, that a person came to her house, and said, "Mrs. Chadsey, you are much indebted to your landlord, and he has sent me to demand the rent that is due to him." She answered, "Sir, I have not so much money in the world: indeed I have none at

all!" "But," said he, "have you nothing that will fetch money?" She replied, "Sir, you see all that I have. I have nothing in the house, but these six little children." "Then," said he, "I must execute my writ, and carry you to Newgate. But it is a hard case. I will leave you here till to morrow, and will go and try, if I cannot persuade your landlord to give you time." He returned the next morning and said, "I have done all I can, I have used all the arguments I could think of, but your landlord is not to be moved. He vows, if I do not carry you to prison without delay, I shall go thither myself." She answered, "You have done *your* part. The will of the Lord be done!" He said, "I will venture to make one trial more, and will come again in the morning." He came in the morning, and said, "Mrs. Chadsey, God has undertaken your cause. None can give you any trouble now: for your landlord died last night. But he has left no will: and no one knows who is heir to the estate."

3. Thus God is able to deliver out of temptations, by removing the occasion of them. But are there not temptations, the occasions of which cannot be taken away? Is it not a striking instance of this kind, which we have in a late publication? "I was walking," says the writer of the letter, "over Dover cliffs, in a calm, pleasant evening, with a person whom I tenderly loved, and to whom I was to be married in a few days. while we were engaged in earnest conversation, her foot slipped, she fell down, and I saw her dashed in pieces on the beach. I lifted up my hands, and cried out, 'This evil admits of no remedy. I must now go mourning all my days! My wound is incurable. It is impossible I should ever find such another woman! One so every way fitted for me.' I added in an agony, 'This is such an affliction as even God himself cannot redress!' And just as I uttered the words I awoke: for it was a dream!"—Just so can God remove any possible temptation; making it like a dream when one waketh!

4. Thus is God able to deliver out of temptation by taking away the very ground of it. And he is equally able to deliver in the temptation, which, perhaps, is the greatest deliverance of all. I mean, suffering the occasion to remain as it was, he will take away the bitterness of it; so that it shall not be a temptation at all, but only an occasion of thanksgiving. How many proofs of this have the children of God, even in their daily experience! How frequently are they encompassed with trouble; or visited with pain or sickness! And when they cry unto the Lord, at some times he takes away the cup from them: he removes the trouble, or sickness, or pain; and it is as though it never had been: at other times he does not make any outward change; outward trouble, or pain, or sickness, continues; but the consolations of the Holy One so increase, as to overbalance them all; and they can boldly declare,

"Labour is rest, and pain is sweet,
When thou, my God, art near."

5. An eminent instance of this kind of deliverance is that which occurs in the life of that excellent man, the Marquis de Renty. When he was in a violent fit of the rheumatism, a friend asked him, "Sir, are you in much pain?" He answered, "My pains are extreme: but through the mercy of God, I give myself up, not to them, but to him." It was in the same spirit that my own father answered, though exhausted with a severe illness, (an ulcer in the bowels, which had given him little rest

day or night, for upwards of seven months,) when I asked, "Sir, are you in pain now?" He answered, with a strong and loud voice, "God does indeed chasten me with pain: yea, all my bones with strong pain. But I thank him for all; I bless him for all; I love him for all."

6. We may observe one more instance of a somewhat similar kind, in the life of the Marquis de Renty. When his wife, whom he very tenderly loved, was exceeding ill, and supposed to be near death, a friend took the liberty to inquire, how he felt himself on the occasion? He replied, "I cannot but say, that this trial affects me in the most tender part. I am exquisitely sensible of my loss. I feel more than it is possible to express. And yet I am so satisfied, that the will of God is done, and not the will of a vile sinner, that were it not for fear of giving offence to others, I could dance and sing!" Thus the merciful, the just, the faithful God, will in one way or other, "in every temptation make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it."

7. This whole passage is fruitful of instruction. Some of the lessons which we may learn from it are,

First: "Let him that most assuredly standeth, take heed lest he fall" into *murmuring:* lest he say in his heart, "Surely no one's case is like mine; no one was ever tried like *me*." Yea, ten thousand. "There has no temptation taken you," but such as is "common to man;" such as you might reasonably expect, if you considered *what you are;* a sinner born to die; a sinful inhabitant of a mortal body, liable to numberless inward and outward sufferings;—and *where you are;* in a shattered, disordered world, surrounded by evil men and evil spirits. Consider this, and you will not repine at the common lot, the general condition of humanity.

8. Secondly: "Let him that standeth, take heed lest he fall;" lest he *tempt God*, by thinking or saying, "This is insupportable; this is too hard; I can never get through it; my burden is heavier than I can bear." Not so: unless something is too hard for God. He will not suffer you to be "tempted above that ye are able." He proportions the burden to your strength. If you want more strength, ask and it shall be given you.

9. Thirdly: "Let him that standeth, take heed lest he fall;" lest he tempt God by *unbelief;* by distrusting his faithfulness. Hath he said, "in every temptation he will make a way to escape?" And shall he not do it? Yea, verily;

> "And far above thy thought
> His counsel shall appear,
> When fully he the work hath wrought,
> That caused thy needless fear."

10. Let us then receive every trial with calm resignation, and with humble confidence, that he who hath all power, all wisdom, all mercy, and all faithfulness, will first support us in every temptation, and then deliver us out of all: so that in the end all things shall work together for good, and we shall happily experience, that all these things were for our profit, that we "might be partakers of his holiness."

SERMON LXXXVIII.—*On Patience.*

"Let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing," James i, 4.

1. "My brethren," says the apostle in the preceding verse, "count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." At first view, this may appear a strange direction; seeing most temptations are, "for the present, not joyous, but grievous." Nevertheless ye know by your own experience, that "the trial of your faith worketh patience:" and if "patience have its proper work, ye shall be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

2. It is not to any particular person, or church, that the apostle gives this instruction; but to all who are partakers of like precious faith, and are seeking after that common salvation. For as long as any of us are upon earth, we are in the region of temptation. He who came into the world, to save his people from their sins, did not come to save them from temptation. He, himself, "knew no sin;" yet while he was in in this vale of tears, "he suffered, being tempted;" and herein also, "left us an example, that we should tread in his steps." We are liable to a thousand temptations, from the corruptible body variously affecting the soul. The soul itself, encompassed as it is with infirmities, exposes us to ten thousand more. And how many are the temptations which we meet with even from the good men, (such at least they are in part, in their general character,) with whom we are called to converse from day to day? Yet what are these to the temptations we may expect to meet with from an evil world? Seeing we all, in effect "dwell with Mesech, and have our habitation in the tents of Kedar." Add to this, that the most dangerous of our enemies are not those that assault us openly. No:

> "Angels our march oppose,
> Who still in strength excel.
> Our secret, sworn, eternal foes,
> Countless, invisible!"

For is not our "adversary the devil, as a roaring lion," with all his infernal legions, still going "about seeking whom he may devour?" This is the case with all the children of men. Yea, and with all the children of God, as long as they sojourn in this strange land. Therefore, if we do not wilfully and carelessly rush into them, yet we shall surely "fall into divers temptations;" temptations innumerable as the stars of heaven; and those varied and complicated a thousand ways. But instead of counting this a loss, as unbelievers would do; "count it all joy; knowing that the trial of your faith," even when it is "tried as by fire," "worketh patience." But "let patience have its perfect work, and ye shall be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

3. But what is *patience?* We do not now speak of a heathen virtue; neither of a natural indolence; but of a gracious temper, wrought in the heart of a believer, by the power of the Holy Ghost. It is a disposition to suffer whatever pleases God, in the manner, and for the time that pleases him. We thereby hold the middle way, neither ολιγωρουντες, *despising* our sufferings, *making little* of them, passing over them lightly, as if they were owing to chance, or second causes; nor, on the

other hand, εκλυομενοι, *affected too much, unnerved, dissolved, sinking under them.* We may observe, the proper object of patience is suffering, either in body or mind. Patience does not imply the not *feeling* this; it is not apathy or insensibility. It is at the utmost distance from stoical stupidity; yea, at an equal distance from fretfulness or dejection. The patient believer is preserved from falling into either of these extremes, by considering who is the author of all his suffering? Even God his Father;—what is the *motive* of his *giving us* to suffer? Not so properly his justice as his love;—and what is the *end* of it? Our "profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness."

4. Very nearly related to patience is *meekness:* if it be not rather a species of it. For may it not be defined, patience of injuries; particularly affronts, reproach, or unjust censure? This teaches not to return evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise blessing. Our blessed Lord himself seems to place peculiar value upon this temper. This he peculiarly calls us to "learn of him, if we would find rest for our souls."

5. But what may we understand by the *work of patience?* "Let patience have its perfect work." It seems to mean, let it have its full fruit or effect. And what is the fruit which the Spirit of God is accustomed to produce hereby, in the heart of a believer? One immediate fruit of patience is peace: a sweet tranquillity of mind; a serenity of spirit, which can never be found unless where patience reigns. And this peace often rises into joy. Even in the midst of various temptations, those that are enabled "in patience to possess their souls," can witness, not only quietness of spirit, but triumph and exultation. This both

> "Lays the rough paths of peevish nature even,
> And opens in each breast a little heaven."

6. How lively is the account which the apostle Peter gives, not only of the peace and joy, but of the hope and love which God works in those patient sufferers, "who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation!" Indeed he appears herein to have an eye to this very passage of St. James: "Though ye are grieved for a season, with manifold temptations, [the very word ποικιλοις πειρασμοις,] that the trial of your faith [the same expression which was used by St. James] may be found to praise, and honour, and glory, at the revelation of Jesus Christ: whom, having not seen, ye love: in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." See here the peace, the joy, and the love, which, through the mighty power of God, are the fruit or "work of patience!"

7. And as peace, hope, joy, and love, are the fruits of patience, both springing from, and confirmed by it, so is also rational, genuine *courage*, which indeed cannot subsist without patience. The brutal courage, or rather fierceness, of a lion, may probably spring from impatience; but true fortitude, the courage of a man, springs from just the contrary temper. Christian *zeal* is likewise confirmed and increased by patience, and so is *activity* in every good work: the same Spirit inciting us to be

> "Patient in bearing ill, and doing well:"

making us equally willing to do and suffer the whole will of God.

8. But what is the *perfect work* of patience? Is it any thing less than the "perfect love of God," constraining us to love every soul of man, "even as Christ loved us?" Is it not the whole of religion, the whole "mind which was also in Christ Jesus?" Is it not "the renewal of our soul in the image of God, after the likeness of him that created us!" And is not the fruit of this, the constant resignation of ourselves, body and spirit, to God; entirely giving up all we are, all we have, and all we love, as a holy sacrifice, acceptable unto God through the Son of his love? It seems this is "the perfect work of patience," consequent upon the trial of our faith.

9. But how does this work differ from that gracious work which is wrought in every believer, when he first finds redemption in the blood of Jesus, even the remission of his sins? Many persons that are not only upright of heart, but that fear, nay, and love God, have not spoken warily upon this head, not according to the oracles of God. They have spoken of the work of sanctification, taking the word in its full sense, as if it were quite of another kind, as if it differed entirely from that which is wrought in justification. But this is a great and dangerous mistake, and has a natural tendency to make us undervalue that glorious work of God, which was wrought in us, when we were justified: whereas in that moment when we are justified freely by his grace, when we are accepted through the beloved, we are born again, born from above, born of the Spirit. And there is as great a change wrought in our souls, when we are born of the Spirit, as was wrought in our bodies when we were born of a woman. There is, in that hour, a general change from inward sinfulness, to inward holiness. The love of the creature is changed to the love of the Creator; the love of the world into the love of God. Earthly desires, the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life, are, in that instant, changed, by the mighty power of God, into heavenly desires. The whirlwind of our will is stopped in its mid career, and sinks down into the will of God. Pride and haughtiness subside into lowliness of heart: as do anger, with all turbulent and unruly passions, into calmness, meekness, and gentleness. In a word, the earthly, sensual, devilish mind, gives place to the "mind that was in Christ Jesus."

10. "Well, but what more than this can be implied in entire sanctification?" It does not imply any new *kind* of holiness: let no man imagine this. From the moment we are justified, till we give up our spirits to God, love is the fulfilling of the law; of the whole evangelical law, which took place of the Adamic law, when the first promise of "the seed of the woman" was made. Love is the sum of Christian sanctification; it is the one *kind* of holiness, which is found only in various *degrees*, in the believers who are distinguished by St. John into "little children, young men, and fathers." The difference between one and the other, properly lies in the degree of love. And herein there is as great a difference in the spiritual, as in the natural sense, between fathers, young men, and babes.

Every one that is born of God, though he be as yet only a "babe in Christ," has the love of God in his heart; the love of his neighbour; together with lowliness, meekness, and resignation. But all of these are then in a low degree, in proportion to the degree of his faith. The faith of a babe in Christ is weak, generally mingled with doubts or

fears; with doubts, whether he has not deceived himself; or fear, that he shall not endure to the end. And if, in order to prevent those perplexing doubts, or to remove those tormenting fears, he catches hold of the opinion, that a true believer cannot make shipwreck of the faith, experience will sooner or later show, that it is merely the staff of a broken reed, which will be so far from sustaining him, that it will only enter into his hand and pierce it. But to return. In the same proportion as he grows in faith, he grows in holiness; he increases in love, lowliness, meekness, in every part of the image of God; till it pleases God after he is thoroughly convinced of inbred sin, of the total corruption of his nature, to take it all away; to purify his heart and cleanse him from all unrighteousness; to fulfil that promise which he made first to his ancient people, and in them to the Israel of God in all ages: "I will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love he Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul."

It is not easy to conceive what a difference there is, between that which he experiences now, and that which he experienced before. Till this universal change was wrought in his soul, all his holiness was *mixed*. He was humble, but not entirely; his humility was mixed with pride: he was meek; but his meekness was frequently interrupted by anger, or some uneasy and turbulent passion. His love of God was frequently damped by the love of some creature; the love of his neighbour, by evil surmising, or some thought, if not temper, contrary to love. His will was not wholly melted down into the will of God: but although in general he could say, I come "not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me;" yet now and then nature rebelled, and he could not clearly say, "Lord, not as I will, but as thou wilt." His whole soul is now consistent with itself; there is no jarring string. All his passions flow in a continual stream, with an even tenor, to God. To him that is entered into his rest, you may truly say,

> "Calm thou ever art within,
> All unruffled, all serene!"

There is no mixture of any contrary affections: all is peace and harmony after. Being filled with love, there is no more interruption of it, than of the beating of his heart; and continual love bringing continual joy in the Lord, he rejoices evermore. He converses continually with the God whom he loves, unto whom in every thing he gives thanks. And as he now loves God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind, and with all his strength; so Jesus now reigns alone in his heart the Lord of every motion there.

11. But it may be inquired, In what manner does God work this entire, this universal change in the soul of a believer? This strange work, which so many will not believe, though we declare it unto them? Does he work it gradually, by slow degrees; or instantaneously in a moment? How many are the disputes upon this head, even among the children of God! And so there will be, after all that ever was, or ever can be said upon it. For many will still say, with the famous Jew, "*Non persuadebis, etiamsi persuaseris:*" that is, "thou shalt not persuade me, though thou dost persuade me." And they will be the more resolute herein, because the Scriptures are silent upon the subject: because the point is not determined, at least not in express terms, in any part of the oracles of God. Every man, therefore, may abound in his own

sense, provided he will allow the same liberty to his neighbour; provided he will not be angry at those who differ from his opinion, nor entertain hard thoughts concerning them. Permit me likewise to add one thing more: be the change instantaneous or gradual, see that you never rest till it is wrought in your own soul, if you desire to dwell with God in glory.

12. This premised, in order to throw what light I can upon this interesting question, I will simply relate what I have seen myself in the course of many years. Four or five and forty years ago, when I had no distinct views of what the apostle meant, by exhorting us to "leave the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and go on to perfection;" two or three persons in London, whom I knew to be truly sincere, desired to give me an account of their experience. It appeared exceeding strange, being different from any that I had heard before: but exactly similar to the preceding account of entire sanctification. The next year, two or three more persons at Bristol, and two or three in Kingswood, coming to me severally, gave me exactly the same account of their experience. A few years after, I desired all those in London, who made the same profession, to come to me all together at the Foundery, that I might be thoroughly satisfied. I desired that man of God, Thomas Walsh, to give us the meeting there. When we met, first one of us, and then the other, asked them the most searching questions we could devise. They answered every one without hesitation, and with the utmost simplicity, so that we were fully persuaded, they did not deceive themselves. In the years 1759, 1760, 1761, and 1762, their numbers multiplied exceedingly, not only in London and Bristol, but in various parts of Ireland as well as England. Not trusting to the testimony of others, I carefully examined most of these myself; and in London alone, I found six hundred and fifty two members of our society, who were exceeding clear in their experience, and of whose testimony I could see no reason to doubt. I believe no year has passed since that time, wherein God has not wrought the same work in many others; but sometimes in one part of England or Ireland, sometimes in another;—as "the wind bloweth where it listeth;"—and every one of these (after the most careful inquiry, I have not found one exception either in Great Britain or Ireland) has declared that his deliverance from sin was *instantaneous;* that the change was wrought in a moment. Had half of these, or one third, or one in twenty, declared it was *gradually* wrought in *them*, I should have believed this, with regard to *them*, and thought that *some* were gradually sanctified and some instantaneously. But as I have not found, in so long a space of time, a single person speaking thus; as all who believe they are sanctified, declare with one voice, that the change was wrought in a moment. I cannot but believe, that sanctification is commonly, if not always, an *instantaneous* work.

13. But however that question be decided, whether sanctification, in the full sense of the word, be wrought instantaneously or gradually, how may we attain to it? "What shall *we* do," said the Jews to our Lord, "that we may work the works of God?" His answer will suit those that ask, What shall we do, that this work of God may be wrought in us? "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." On this one work all the others depend. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and all his wisdom, and power, and faithfulness, are engaged on

thy side. In this, as in all other instances, "by grace we are saved through faith." Sanctification too is "not of works, lest any man should boast." "It is the gift of God," and is to be received by plain, simple faith. Suppose you are now labouring to "abstain from all appearance of evil," "zealous of good works," and walking diligently and carefully in all the ordinances of God; there is then only one point remaining. the voice of God to your soul is, "Believe, and be saved."* First, believe that God has *promised* to save you from all sin, and to fill you with all holiness: secondly, believe that he is *able* thus "to save to the uttermost all that come unto God through him:" thirdly, believe that he is *willing*, as well as able, to save *you* to the uttermost; to purify you from all sin, and fill up all your heart with love. Believe fourthly, that he is not only able, but willing to do it *now!* Not when you come to die; not at any distant time; not to morrow, but *to day*. He will then enable you to believe, *it is done*, according to his word: and then "patience shall have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

14. Ye shall then be perfect. The apostle seems to mean by this expression, τελειοι, Ye shall be wholly delivered from every evil work; from every evil word; from every sinful thought; yea, from every evil desire, passion, temper; from all inbred corruption, from all remains of the carnal mind, from the body of sin; and ye shall be renewed in the spirit of your mind, in every right temper, after the image of him that created you, in righteousness and true holiness. Ye shall be *entire*, ολοκληροι: (the same word which the apostle uses to the Christians in Thessalonica.) This seems to refer, not so much to the kind, as to the degree of holiness, as if he had said, "Ye shall enjoy as high a degree of holiness, as is consistent with your present state of pilgrimage," and ye shall *want nothing;* the Lord being your Shepherd, your Father, your Redeemer, your Sanctifier, your God, and your All, will feed you with the bread of heaven, and give you meat enough. He will lead you forth beside the waters of comfort, and keep you every moment: so that loving him with all your heart, (which is the sum of all perfection,) you will "rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in every thing give thanks," till "an abundant entrance is ministered unto you, into his everlasting kingdom!"

Sermon LXXXIX.—*The Important Question.*

"What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Matt. xvi, 26.

1. There is a celebrated remark to this effect, (I think in the works of Mr. Pascal,) That if a man of low estate would speak of high things, as of what relates to kings or kingdoms, it is not easy for him to find suitable expressions, as he is so little acquainted with things of this nature: but if one of royal parentage speaks of royal things, of what concerns his own or his father's kingdom, his language will be free and easy, as these things are familiar to his thoughts. In like manner, if a mere inhabitant of this lower world speaks concerning the great things

* See the sermon on *The Way of Salvation.*

of the kingdom of God, hardly is he able to find expressions suitable to the greatness of the subject. But when the Son of God speaks of the highest things, which concern his heavenly kingdom, all his language is easy and unlaboured, his words natural and unaffected: inasmuch as, known unto him are all these things from all eternity.

2. How strongly is this remark exemplified in the passage now before us! The Son of God, the great king of heaven and earth, here uses the plainest and easiest words: but how high and deep are the things which he expresses therein? None of the children of men can fully conceive them, till emerging out of the darkness of the present world, he commences an inhabitant of eternity.

3. But we may conceive a little of these deep things, if we consider, first, What is implied in that expression, A man's *gaining* the whole world: secondly, What is implied in *losing* his own soul: we shall then, thirdly, see in the strongest light, What he is *profited*, who gains the whole world, and loses his own soul.

I. 1. We are first, to consider, What is implied in a man's *gaining* the whole world. Perhaps, at the first hearing, this may seem to some equivalent with conquering the whole world. But it has no relation thereto at all: and indeed that expression involves a plain absurdity. For it is impossible, any that is born of a woman should ever conquer the whole world; were it only because the short life of man could not suffice for so wild an undertaking. Accordingly, no man ever did conquer the half, no, nor the tenth part of the world. But whatever others might do, there was no danger that any of our Lord's hearers should have any thought of this. Among all the sins of the Jewish nation, the desire of universal empire was not found. Even in their most flourishing times, they never sought to extend their conquests beyond the river Euphrates. And in our Lord's time, all their ambition was at an end: "the sceptre was departed from Judah;" and Judea was governed by a Roman procurator, as a branch of the Roman empire.

2. Leaving this, we may find a far more easy and natural sense of the expression. To gain the whole world, may properly enough imply, to gain all the pleasures which the world can give. The man we speak of, may, therefore, be supposed to have gained all that will gratify his senses. In particular, all that can increase his pleasure of tasting; all the elegancies of meat and drink: likewise, whatever can gratify his smell, or touch; all that he can enjoy in common with his fellow brutes. He may have all the plenty and all the variety of these objects which the world can afford.

3. We may farther suppose him to have gained all that gratifies "the desire of the eyes;" whatever (by means of the eye chiefly) conveys any pleasure to the imagination. The pleasures of imagination arise from three sources: grandeur, beauty, and novelty. Accordingly, we find by experience, our own imagination is gratified by surveying either grand, or beautiful, or uncommon objects. Let him be encompassed then with the most grand, the most beautiful, and the newest things that can any where be found. For all this is manifestly implied in a man's gaining the whole world.

4. But there is also another thing implied herein, which men of the most elevated spirits have preferred before all the pleasures of sense and of imagination put together; that is, honour, glory, renown:

Virûm volitare per ora.

It seems, that hardly any principle of the human mind is of greater force than this. It triumphs over the strongest propensities of nature, over all our appetites and affections. If Brutus sheds the blood of his own children; if we see another Brutus, in spite of every possible obligation, in defiance of all justice and gratitude,

"Cringing while he stabs his friend;"

if a far greater man than either of these, Paschal Paoli, gave up ease, pleasure, every thing, for a life of constant toil, pain, and alarms;—what principle could support them? They might talk of *amor patriæ*, the love of their country; but this would never have carried them through, had there not been also the

Laudum immensa cupido:

the immense thirst of *praise*. Now the man we speak of, has gained abundance of this: he is praised, if not admired, by all that are round about him. Nay, his name is gone forth into distant lands, as it were, to the ends of the earth.

5. Add to this, that he has gained abundance of wealth; that there is no end of his treasures; that he has laid up silver as the dust, and gold as the sand of the sea. Now when a man has obtained all these pleasures, all that will gratify either the senses or the imagination; when he has gained an honourable name, and also laid up much treasure for many years; then he may be said, in an easy, natural sense of the word, to have "gained the whole world."

II. 1. The next point we have to consider is, What is implied in a man's *losing* his own soul? But here we draw a deeper scene, and have need of a more steady attention. For it is easy to sum up all in a man's "*gaining* the whole world;" but it is not easy to understand all that is implied in his "losing his own soul." Indeed none can fully conceive this, until he has passed through time into eternity.

2. The first thing which it undeniably implies, is the losing all the present pleasures of religion; all those which it affords to truly religious men, even in the present life. "If there be any consolation in Christ; if any comfort of love;" in the love of God, and of all mankind; if any "joy in the Holy Ghost;" if there be a peace of God; a peace that passeth all understanding; if there be any rejoicing in the testimony of a good conscience towards God; it is manifest, all this is totally lost, by the man that loses his own soul.

3. But the present life will soon be at an end: we know it passes away like a shadow. The hour is at hand, when the spirit will be summoned to return to God that gave it. In that awful moment,

"Leaving the old, both worlds at once they view,
Who stand upon the threshold of the new."

And whether he looks backward or forward, how pleasing is the prospect to him that saves his soul! If he looks back, he has "the calm remembrance of a life well spent." If he looks forward, there is an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away; and he sees the convoy of angels ready to carry him into Abraham's bosom. But how is it in that solemn hour, with the man that loses his soul? Does he look back? What comfort is there in this? He sees nothing but scenes of horror, matter of shame, remorse, and self condemnation; a

foretaste of "the worm that never dieth." If he looks forward, what does he see? No joy, no peace! No gleam of hope from any point of heaven! Some years since, one who turned back as a dog to his vomit, was struck in his mid career of sin. A friend visiting him, prayed, "Lord, have mercy upon those who are just stepping out of the body, and know not which shall meet them at their entrance into the other world, an angel or a fiend!" The sick man shrieked out with a piercing cry, "A fiend! a fiend!" and died. Just such an end, unless he die like an ox, may any man expect who loses his own soul.

4. But in what situation is the spirit of a good man, at his entrance into eternity? See,

> The convoy attends,
> The ministering host of invisible friends:"

They receive the new born spirit, and conduct him safe into Abraham's bosom; into the delights of paradise; the garden of God, where the light of his countenance perpetually shines. It is but one of a thousand commendations of this anti-chamber of heaven, that "there the wicked cease from troubling; there the weary are at rest." For there they have numberless sources of happiness, which they could not have upon earth. There they meet with "the glorious dead of ancient days." They converse with Adam, first of men; with Noah, first of the new world; with Abraham, the friend of God; with Moses and the prophets; with the apostles of the Lamb; with the saints of all ages; and above all, they are with Christ.

5. How different, alas! is the case with him who loses his own soul! The moment he steps into eternity, he meets with the devil and his angels. Sad convoy into the world of spirits! Sad earnest of what is to come! And either he is bound with chains of darkness, and reserved unto the judgment of the great day; or, at best, he wanders up and down, seeking rest, but finding none. Perhaps he may seek it, (like the unclean spirit cast out of the man,) in dry, dreary, desolate places; perhaps

> "Where nature all in ruins lies,
> And owns her sovereign, death:"

And little comfort can he find here! seeing every thing contributes to increase, not remove, the fearful expectation of fiery indignation, which will devour the ungodly.

6. For even this is to him but the beginning of sorrows. Yet a little while, and he will see "the great white throne coming down from heaven, and him that sitteth thereon, from whose face the heavens and the earth flee away, and there is found no place for them." And "the dead, small and great, stand before God, and are judged, every one according to his works." "Then shall the King say to them on his right hand," (God grant he may say so to you!) "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." And the angels shall tune their harps and sing, "Lift up your heads, oh ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, that the heirs of glory may come in." And then shall they "shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever."

7. How different will be the lot of him that loses his own soul! No joyful sentence will be pronounced on him, but one that will pierce him through with unutterable horror: (God forbid that ever it should be

pronounced on any of you that are here before God!) "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!" And who can doubt, but those infernal spirits will immediately execute the sentence; will instantly drag those forsaken of God into their own place of torment! Into those

> "Regions of sorrow, doleful shades; where peace
> And rest can never dwell! Hope never comes,
> That comes to all,"

all the children of men who are on this side eternity. But not to them: the gulf is now fixed, over which they cannot pass. From the moment wherein they are once plunged into the lake of fire, burning with brimstone, their torments are not only without intermission, but likewise without end. For "they have no rest, day or night; but the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever!"

III. Upon ever so cursory a view of these things, would not any one be astonished, that a man, that a creature endued with reason, should voluntarily choose;—I say *choose;* for God forces no man into inevitable damnation: he never yet

> "Consign'd one unborn soul to hell,
> Or damn'd him from his mother's womb;"—

should choose thus to lose his own soul, though it were to gain the whole world! For what shall a man be profited thereby, upon the whole of the account?

But a little to abate our astonishment at this, let us observe the suppositions which a man generally makes, before he can reconcile himself to this fatal choice.

1. He supposes, first, "That a life of religion is a life of misery." That religion is misery! How is it possible that any one should entertain so strange a thought? Do any of *you* imagine this? If you do, the reason is plain; you know not what religion is. "No! But I do, as well as you."—What is it then? "Why the doing no harm." Not so: many birds and beasts do no harm, yet they are not capable of religion. "Then it is going to church and sacrament." Indeed it is not. This may be an excellent help to religion; and every one who desires to save his soul, should attend them at all opportunities: yet it is possible you may attend them all your days, and still have no religion at all. Religion is a higher and deeper thing than any outward ordinance whatever.

2. What is religion then? It is easy to answer, if we consult the oracles of God. According to these, it lies in one single point: it is neither more nor less than love: it is love which "is the fulfilling of the law, the end of the commandment." Religion is the love of God and our neighbour; that is, every man under heaven. This love ruling the whole life, animating all our tempers and passions, directing all our thoughts, words, and actions, is "pure religion and undefiled."

3. Now will any one be so hardy as to say, that love is misery? Is it misery to love God? to give him my heart, who alone is worthy of it? Nay, it is the truest happiness; indeed, the only true happiness which is to be found under the sun. So does all experience prove the justness of that reflection which was made long ago, "Thou hast made us for thyself; and our heart cannot rest, until it resteth in thee." Or does any one imagine, the love of our neighbour is misery; even the loving

every man as our own soul? So far from it, that, next to the love of God, this affords the greatest happiness of which we are capable. Therefore,

"Let not the stoic boast his mind unmoved,
The brute philosopher, who ne'er has proved
The joy of loving, or of being loved."

4. So much every reasonable man must allow. But he may object, "There is more than this implied in religion. It implies not only the love of God and man; (against which I have no objection;) but also a great deal of doing and suffering. And how can this be consistent with happiness?"

There is certainly some truth in this objection. Religion does imply both doing and suffering. Let us then calmly consider, whether this impairs or heightens our happiness.

Religion implies, first, The doing many things. For the love of God will naturally lead us, at all opportunities, to converse with him we love: to speak to him in public or private prayer; and to hear the words of his mouth, which "are dearer to us than thousands of gold and silver." It will incline us to lose no opportunity of receiving

"The dear memorials of our dying Lord:"

to continue instant in thanksgiving: at morning, evening, and noonday to praise him. But suppose we do all this, will it lessen our happiness? Just the reverse. It is plain all these fruits of love are means of increasing the love from which they spring; and of consequence they increase our happiness in the same proportion. Who then would not join in that wish;

"Rising to sing my Saviour's praise,
Thee may I publish all day long:
And let thy precious word of grace
Flow from my heart and fill my tongue;
Fill all my life with purest love,
And join me to thy church above!"

5 It must also be allowed that as the love of God naturally leads to works of piety, so the love of our neighbour naturally leads all that feel it, to works of mercy. It inclines us to feed the hungry; to clothe the naked; to visit them that are sick or in prison; to be as eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame; a husband to the widow, a father to the fatherless. But can you suppose, that the doing this will prevent or lessen your happiness? Yea, though you did so much, as to be like a guardian angel to all that are round about you? On the contrary, it is an infallible truth, that

"All worldly joys are less
Than that one joy of doing kindnesses."

A man of pleasure was asked some years ago, "Captain, what was the greatest pleasure you ever had?" After a little pause he replied, "When we were upon our march in Ireland, in a very hot day, I called at a cabin on the road, and desired a little water. The woman brought me a cup of milk. I gave her a piece of silver; and the joy that poor creature expressed, gave me the greatest pleasure I ever had in my life." Now, if the doing good gave so much pleasure to one who acted merely from natural generosity, how much more must it give to one who does it on a nobler principle; the joint love of God and his neighbour? It

remains, that the doing all which religion requires, will not lessen, but immensely increase our happiness.

6. "Perhaps this also may be allowed. But religion implies, according to the Christian account, not only doing, but *suffering*. And how can suffering be consistent with happiness?" Perfectly well. Many centuries ago, it was remarked by St. Chrysostom; "The Christian has his sorrows as well as his joys: but his sorrow is sweeter than joy." He may accidentally suffer loss, poverty, pain: but in all these things he is more than conqueror. He can testify,

> "Labour is rest, and pain is sweet,
> While thou my God, art here."

He can say, "The Lord gave; the Lord taketh away: blessed be the name of the Lord!" He must suffer, more or less, reproach: for "the servant is not above his master:" but so much the more does "the Spirit of glory and of God rest upon him." Yea, love itself will, on several occasions, be the source of suffering: the love of God will frequently produce

> "The pleasing smart,
> The meltings of a broken heart."

And the love of our neighbour will give rise to sympathizing sorrow: it will lead us to visit the fatherless and widow in their affliction; to be tenderly concerned for the distressed, and to "mix our pitying tears with those that weep." But may we not well say, These are "tears that delight, and sighs that waft to heaven?" So far, then, are all these sufferings from either preventing or lessening our happiness, that they greatly contribute thereto, and indeed constitute no inconsiderable part of it. So that, upon the whole, there cannot be a more false supposition, than that a life of religion is a life of misery; seeing true religion, whether considered in its nature or its fruits, is true and solid happiness.

7. The man who chooses to gain the world by the loss of his soul, supposes, secondly, "That a life of wickedness is a life of happiness!" That wickedness is happiness! Even an old heathen poet could have taught him better. Even Juvenal discovered, *nemo malus felix:* no wicked man is happy. And how expressly does God himself declare, "There is no peace to the wicked:" no peace of mind: and without this, there can be no happiness.

But not to avail ourselves of authority, let us weigh the thing in the balance of reason. I ask, what can make a wicked man happy? You answer, he has gained the whole world. We allow it; and what does this imply? He has gained all that gratifies the senses: in particular all that can please the taste; all the delicacies of meat and drink. True; but can eating and drinking make a man happy? They never did yet; and certain it is, they never will. This is too coarse food for an immortal spirit. But suppose it did give him a poor kind of happiness, during those moments wherein he was swallowing; what will he do with the residue of his time? Will it not hang heavy upon his hands? Will he not groan under many a tedious hour, and think swift winged time flies too slow? If he is not fully employed, will he not frequently complain of lowness of spirits? An unmeaning expression; which the miserable physician usually no more understands, than his miserable patient. We know there are such things as nervous disorders But we know, likewise, that what is commonly called *nervous lowness*

is a secret reproof from God; a kind of consciousness, that we are not in our place; that we are not as God would have us to be: we are unhinged from our proper centre.

8. To remove, or at least soothe this strange uneasiness, let him add the pleasures of imagination. Let him bedaub himself with silver and gold, and adorn himself with all the colours of the rainbow. Let him build splendid palaces, and furnish them in the most elegant as well as costly manner. Let him lay out walks and gardens, beautified with all that nature and art can afford. And how long will these give him pleasure? Only as long as they are new. As soon as ever the novelty is gone, the pleasure is gone also. After he has surveyed them a few months, or years, they give him no more satisfaction. The man who is saving his soul, has the advantage of him in this very respect. For he can say,

"In the pleasures the rich man's possessions display,
Unenvied I challenge my part;
While every fair object my eye can survey,
Contributes to gladden my heart."

9. "However, he has yet another resource: *applause; glory.* And will not this make him happy?" It will not: for he cannot be applauded by all men: no man ever was. Some will praise: perhaps many; but not all. It is certain some will blame: and he that is fond of applause, will feel more pain from the censure of one, than pleasure from the praise of many. So that whoever seeks happiness in applause, will infallibly be disappointed, and will find, upon the whole of the account, abundantly more pain than pleasure.

10. But to bring the matter to a short issue. Let us take an instance of one who had gained more of this world than probably any man now alive, unless he be a sovereign prince. But did all he had gained, make him happy? Answer for thyself! Then said Haman, yet "all this profiteth me nothing, while I see Mordecai sitting at the gate." Poor Haman! One unholy temper, whether pride, envy, jealousy, or revenge, gave him more pain, more vexation of spirit, than all the world could give pleasure. And so it must be in the nature of things; for all unholy tempers are unhappy tempers. Ambition, covetousness, vanity, inordinate affection, malice, revengefulness, carry their own punishment with them, and avenge themselves on the soul wherein they dwell. Indeed what are these, more especially when they are combined with an awakened conscience, but the dogs of hell, already gnawing the soul, forbidding happiness to approach! Did not even the heathens see this? What else means their fable of Tityus, chained to a rock, with a vulture continually tearing up his breast, and feeding upon his liver? *Quid rides?* Why do you smile? says the poet:

Mutato nomine, de te
Fabula narratur.

It is another name: but thou art the man! Lust, foolish desire, envy, malice, or anger, is now tearing thy breast: love of money, or of praise hatred, or revenge, is now feeding on thy poor spirit. Such happiness is in vice! So vain is the supposition that a life of wickedness is a life of happiness!

11. But he makes a third supposition; "that he shall certainly live forty, or fifty, or three score years." Do *you* depend upon this? on

living three score years? Who told you that you should? It is no other than the enemy of God and man: it is the murderer of souls. Believe him not; he was a liar from the beginning; from the beginning of his rebellion against God. He is eminently a liar in this: for he would not give you life, if he could. Would God permit, he would make sure work, and just now hurry you to his own place. And he cannot give you life, if he would: the breath of man is not in his hands. He is not the disposer of life and death: that power belongs to the Most High. It is possible, indeed, God may, on some occasions, permit him to inflict death. I do not know, but it was an evil angel who smote a hundred four score and five thousand Assyrians in one night: and the fine lines of our poet are as applicable to an evil, as to a good spirit:—

> "So when an angel, by divine command,
> Hurls death and terror o'er a guilty land:
> He, pleased the Almighty's orders to perform,
> Rides in the whirlwind, and directs the storm."

But though Satan may sometimes inflict death, I know not that he could ever give life. It was one of his most faithful servants, that shrieked out some years ago, "A week's life! a week's life! Thirty thousand pounds for a week's life!" But he could not purchase a day's life. That night, God required his soul of him. And how soon may he require it of you? Are you sure of living three score years? Are you sure of living one year? one week? one day? Oh make haste to live! Surely the man that may die to night, should live to day.

12. So absurd are all the suppositions made by him, who gains the world, and loses his soul. But let us for a moment imagine, that wickedness is happiness; and that he shall certainly live three score years; and still I would ask, "What is he profited," if he gain the whole world for three score years, and then lose his soul eternally?

Can such a choice be made by any that considers what eternity is? Philip Melancthon, the most learned of all the German reformers, gives the following relation: (I pass no judgment upon it, but set it down nearly in his own words:) "When I was at Wirtemburg, as I was walking out one summer evening with several of my fellow students, we heard an uncommon singing, and following the sound, saw a bird of an uncommon figure. One stepping up, asked, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, what art thou? It answered, 'I am a damned spirit:' and in vanishing away, pronounced these words, 'Oh eternity, eternity! who can tell the length of eternity!'" And how soon would this be the language of him who sold his soul for three score years' pleasure! How soon would he cry out, "Oh eternity, eternity! who can tell the length of eternity!"

13. In how striking a manner is this illustrated by one of the ancient fathers! "Supposing there was a ball of sand as big as the whole earth. Suppose a grain of this to be annihilated in a thousand years: which would be more eligible, to be happy while this ball was wasting away at the rate of one grain in a thousand years, and miserable ever after? or to be miserable while it was wasting away at that proportion, and happy ever after?" A wise man, it is certain, could not pause one moment upon the choice; seeing all that time wherein this ball would be wasting away, bears infinitely less proportion to eternity, than a drop of water to the whole ocean, or a grain of sand to the whole mass. Allow-

ing, then, that a life of religion were a life of misery; that a life of wickedness were a life of happiness; and, that a man were assured of enjoying that happiness for the term of three score years; yet what would he be profited, if he were then to be miserable to all eternity?

14. But it has been proved that the case is quite otherwise: that religion is happiness; that wickedness is misery; and that no man is assured of living three score days: and if so, is there any fool, any madman under heaven, who can be compared to him that casts away his own soul, though it were to gain the whole world? For what is the real state of the case? What is the choice which God proposes to his creatures? It is not, "Will you be happy three score years, and then miserable for ever; or will you be miserable three score years, and then happy for ever?" It is not, "Will you have first a temporary heaven, and then hell eternal; or, will you have first a temporary hell, and then heaven eternal?" But it is simply this, "Will you be miserable three score years, and miserable ever after; or, will you be happy three score years, and happy ever after? Will you have a foretaste of heaven now, and then heaven for ever; or, will you have a foretaste of hell now, and then hell for ever? Will you have two hells or two heavens?"

15. One would think there needed no great sagacity to answer this question. And this is the very question which I now propose to you in the name of God. Will you be happy here and hereafter; in the world that now is, and in that which is to come? Or will you be miserable here and hereafter; in time and in eternity? What is your choice? Let there be no delay: now take one or the other! I take heaven and earth to record this day, that I set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Oh choose life! the life of peace and love now; the life of glory for ever! By the grace of God, now choose that better part, which shall never be taken from you! And having once fixed your choice, never draw back; adhere to it at all events. Go on in the name of the Lord, whom ye have chosen, and in the power of his might! In spite of all opposition, from nature, from the world, from all the powers of darkness, still fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life! And then there is laid up for you a crown, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give you at that day!

SERMON XC.—*On working out our own Salvation.*

"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is GOD that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure," Phil. ii, 12, 13.

1. SOME great truths, as the being and attributes of God, and the difference between moral good and evil, were known, in some measure, to the heathen world. The traces of them are to be found in all nations: so that, in some sense, it may be said to every child of man, "He hath showed thee, oh man, what is good; even to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." With this truth he has, in some measure, "enlightened every one that cometh into the world." And hereby they that "have not the law," that have no written law, "are a law unto themselves." They show "the work of the law;" the substance of it, though not the letter; "written in their hearts," by the

same hand which wrote the commandments on the tables of stone "their conscience also bearing them witness," whether they act suitably thereto or not.

2. But there are two grand heads of doctrine, which contain many truths of the most important nature, of which the most enlightened heathens in the ancient world were totally ignorant; as are also the most intelligent heathens, that are now on the face of the earth; I mean those which relate to the eternal SON of GOD, and the SPIRIT of GOD. to the Son, giving himself to be "a propitiation for the sins of the world;" and to the Spirit of God, renewing men in that image of God wherein they were created. For after all the pains which ingenious and learned men have taken, (that great man, Chevalier Ramsay in particular,) to find some resemblance of these truths in the immense rubbish of heathen authors, the resemblance is so exceeding faint, as not to be discerned but by a very lively imagination. Beside that, even this resemblance, faint as it was, is only to be found in the discourses of a very few; and those were the most improved and deeply thinking men, in their several generations; while the innumerable multitudes that surrounded them, were little better for the knowledge of the philosophers; but remained as totally ignorant even of these capital truths, as were the beasts that perish.

3. Certain it is, that these truths were never known to the vulgar, the bulk of mankind, to the generality of men in any nation, till they were brought to light by the gospel. Notwithstanding a spark of knowledge glimmering here and there, the whole earth was covered with darkness till the Sun of righteousness arose and scattered the shades of night. Since this day spring from on high has appeared, a great light hath shined unto those, who, till then, sat in darkness and in the shadow of death. And thousands of them in every age have known, "that God so loved the world as to give his only Son, to the end that whosoever believeth on him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." And being intrusted with the oracles of God, they have known that God hath also given us his Holy Spirit who "worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

4. How remarkable are those words of the apostle which precede these? "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God;" the incommunicable nature of God from eternity; "counted it no act of robbery;" (that is the precise meaning of the word;) no invasion of any other's prerogative: but his own unquestionable right, "to be equal with God." The word implies both the *fulness* and the supreme *height* of the Godhead. To which are opposed the two words, he *emptied*, and he *humbled himself*. He "emptied himself," of that divine fulness, veiled his fulness from the eyes of men and angels; "taking," and by that very act emptying himself, "the form of a servant; being made in the likeness of man;" a real man, like other men. "And being found in fashion as a man," a common man, without any peculiar beauty or excellency; "he humbled himself" to a still greater degree, "becoming obedient" to God, though equal with him, "even unto death; yea, the death of the cross:" the greatest instance both of humiliation and obedience.

Having proposed the example of Christ, the apostle exhorts them to secure the salvation which Christ hath purchased for them: "Where-

fore, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

In these comprehensive words we may observe,

I. That grand truth which ought never to be out of our remembrance: "It is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of his own good pleasure."

II. The improvement we ought to make of it: "Work out our own salvation with fear and trembling."

III. The connection between them: "It is God that worketh in you;" therefore "work out your own salvation."

I. 1. First, we are to observe that great and important truth which ought never to be out of our remembrance: "It is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure." The meaning of these words may be made more plain, by a small transposition of them. "It is God that of his good pleasure worketh in you both to will and to do." This position of the words, connecting the phrase, *of his good pleasure*, with the word *worketh*, removes all imagination of merit from man, and gives God the whole glory of his work. Otherwise we might have had some room for boasting, as if it were our own desert, some goodness in us, or some good thing done by us, which first moved God to work. But this expression cuts off all such vain conceits, and clearly shows, his motive to work lay wholly in himself: in his own mere grace; in his unmerited mercy.

2. It is by this alone he is impelled to work in man both to will and to do. The expression is capable of two interpretations; both of which are unquestionably true. First, *to will*, may include the whole of inward, *to do*, the whole of outward religion. And if it be thus understood, it implies, that it is God that worketh both inward and outward holiness. Secondly, *to will*, may imply every good desire; *to do*, whatever results therefrom. And then the sentence means, God breathes into us every good desire, and brings every good desire to good effect.

3. The original words το θελειν and το ενεργειν seem to favour the latter construction: το θελειν, which we render *to will*, plainly including every good desire, whether relating to our tempers, words, or actions; to inward or outward holiness. And το ενεργειν, which we render *to do*, manifestly implies all that power from on high, all that energy which works in us every right disposition; and then furnishes us for every good word and work.

4. Nothing can so directly tend to hide pride from man, as a deep, lasting conviction of this. For if we are thoroughly sensible that we have nothing which we have not received, how can we glory as if we had not received it? If we know and feel, that the very first motion of good is from above, as well as the power which conducts it to the end; if it is God that not only infuses every good desire, but that accompanies and follows it, else it vanishes away; then it evidently follows, that "he who glorieth must glory in the Lord."

II. 1. Proceed we now to the second point: if God worketh in you, then work out your own salvation. The original word, rendered, *work out*, implies the doing a thing thoroughly. *Your own;* for you yourselves must do this, or it will be left undone for ever. Your *own salvation:* salvation begins with what is usually termed, (and very properly,) preventing grace; including the first wish to please God, the first

dawn of light concerning his will; and the first slight transient conviction of having sinned against him. All these imply some tendency towards life; some degree of salvation; the beginning of a deliverance from a blind, unfeeling heart, quite insensible of God and the things of God. Salvation is carried on by *convincing grace*, usually in Scripture termed, *repentance;* which brings a larger measure of self knowledge, and a farther deliverance from the heart of stone. Afterwards we experience the proper Christian salvation; whereby, "through grace," we "are saved by faith;" consisting of those two grand branches, justification and sanctification. By justification we are saved from the guilt of sin, and restored to the favour of God; by sanctification we are saved from the power and root of sin, and restored to the image of God. All experience, as well as Scripture, show this salvation to be both instantaneous and gradual. It begins the moment we are justified, in the holy, humble, gentle, patient love of God and man. It gradually increases from that moment, as "a grain of mustard seed, which, at first, is the least of all seeds," but afterwards puts forth large branches, and becomes a great tree; till, in another instant, the heart is cleansed from all sin, and filled with pure love to GOD and man. But even that love increases more and more, till we "grow up in all things into him that is our head;" till we "attain the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

2. But how are we to *work out* this salvation? The apostle answers, "with fear and trembling." There is another passage of St. Paul, wherein the same expression occurs, which may give light to this. "Servants, obey your masters according to the flesh;"—according to the present state of things, although sensible that in a little time the servant will be free from his master;—"with fear and trembling." This is a proverbial expression, which cannot be understood literally. For what master could bear, much less require, his servant to stand trembling and quaking before him? And the following words utterly exclude this meaning: "In singleness of heart;" with a single eye to the will and providence of God; "not with eye service, as men pleasers, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart:" doing whatever they do as the will of God, and, therefore, with their might Eph. vi, 5, &c. It is easy to see that these strong expressions of the apostle clearly imply two things: first, That every thing be done with the utmost earnestness of spirit, and with all care and caution: (perhaps more directly referring to the former word μετα φοβου, *with fear.*) Secondly, that it be done with the utmost diligence, speed, punctuality, and exactness; not improbably referring to the latter word, μετα τρομου, *with trembling.*

3. How easily may we transfer this to the business of life; the working out our own salvation? With the same temper, and in the same manner, that Christian servants serve their masters that are upon earth, let other Christians labour to serve their Master that is in heaven: that is, first with the utmost earnestness of spirit; with all possible care and caution; and, secondly, with the utmost diligence, speed, punctuality, and exactness.

4. But what are the steps which the Scriptures direct us to take, in the working out of our own salvation? The prophet Isaiah gives us a general answer, touching the first steps which we are to take: 'Cease

to do evil; learn to do well." If ever you desire that God should work in you that faith, whereof cometh both present and eternal salvation, by the grace already given, fly from all sin as from the face of a serpent, carefully avoid every evil word and work; yea, abstain from all appearance of evil. And "learn to do well:" be zealous of good works, of works of piety, as well as works of mercy; family prayer, and crying to God in secret. Fast in secret, and "your Father which seeth in secret, he will reward you openly." "Search the Scriptures:" hear them in public, read them in private, and meditate therein. At every opportunity, be a partaker of the Lord's supper. "Do this in remembrance" of him; and he will meet you at his own table. Let your conversation be with the children of God; and see that it "be in grace, seasoned with salt." As ye have time, do good unto all men; to their souls and to their bodies. And herein "be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." It then only remains, that ye deny yourselves and take up your cross daily. Deny yourselves every pleasure which does not prepare you for taking pleasure in God, and willingly embrace every means of drawing near to God, though it be a cross, though it be grievous to flesh and blood. Thus when you have redemption in the blood of Christ, you will "go on to perfection;" till "walking in the light as he is in the light," you are enabled to testify, that "he is faithful and just," not only to "forgive [your] sins, but to cleanse you from all unrighteousness."

III. 1. "But (say some) what connection is there between the former and the latter clause of this sentence? Is there not rather a flat opposition between the one and the other? If it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do, what need is there of our working? Does not his working thus supersede the necessity of our working at all? Nay, does it not render our working impracticable, as well as unnecessary? For if we allow that God does all, what is there left for us to do?"

2. Such is the reasoning of flesh and blood. And at first hearing, it is exceeding plausible. But it is not solid; as will evidently appear, if we consider the matter more deeply. We shall then see, there is no opposition between these; "God works; therefore, do ye work;"—but, on the contrary, the closest connection; and that in two respects. For, first, God works; therefore you *can* work; secondly, God works, therefore you *must* work.

3. First, God worketh in you; therefore, you *can* work: otherwise it would be impossible. If he did not work, it would be impossible for you to work out your own salvation. "With man this is impossible," saith our Lord, "for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven." Yea, it is impossible for any man; for any that is born of a woman; unless God work in him. Seeing all men are, by nature, not only sick, but "dead in trespasses and in sins," it is not possible for them to do any thing well, till God raises them from the dead. It was impossible for Lazarus to come forth, till the Lord had given him life. And it is equally impossible for us to *come* out of our sins, yea, or to make the least motion towards it, till he who hath all power in heaven and earth, calls our dead souls into life.

4. Yet this is no excuse for those who continue in sin, and lay the blame upon their Maker, by saying, "It is God only that must quicken us; for we cannot quicken our own souls." For allowing that all the

souls of men are dead in sin by *nature*, this excuses none, seeing there is no man that is in a state of mere nature; there is no man, unless he has quenched the Spirit, that is wholly void of the grace of God. No man living is entirely destitute of what is vulgarly called *natural conscience*. But this is not natural: it is more properly termed, *preventing grace*. Every man has a greater or less measure of this, which waiteth not for the call of man. Every one has, sooner or later, good desires; although the generality of men stifle them before they can strike deep root, or produce any considerable fruit. Every one has some measure of that light, some faint glimmering ray, which sooner or later, more or less, enlightens every man that cometh into the world. And every one, unless he be one of the small number, whose conscience is seared as with a hot iron, feels more or less uneasy when he acts contrary to the light of his own conscience. So that no man sins because he has not grace, but because he does not use the grace which he hath.

5. Therefore, in as much as God works in you, you are now able to work out your own salvation. Since he worketh in you of his own good pleasure, without any merit of yours, both to will and to do, it is possible for you to fulfil all righteousness. It is possible for you to "love God, because he hath first loved us;" and to "walk in love," after the pattern of our great Master. We know, indeed, that word of his to be absolutely true; "Without me, ye can do nothing." But on the other hand, we know, every believer can say, "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me."

6. Meantime let us remember, that God has joined these together in the experience of every believer: and therefore we must take care, not to imagine they are ever to be put asunder. We must beware of that mock humility, which teacheth us to say, in excuse for our wilful disobedience, "Oh, I can do nothing:" and stops there, without once naming the grace of God. Pray, think twice. Consider what you say. I hope you wrong yourself. For if it be really true that you can do nothing, then you have no faith. And if you have not faith, you are in a wretched condition: you are not in a state of salvation. Surely it is not so. You can do something through Christ strengthening you. Stir up the spark of grace which is now in you, and he will give you more grace.

7. Secondly: God worketh in you; therefore, you *must* work: you must be "workers together with him," (they are the very words of the apostle,) otherwise he will cease working. The general rule on which his gracious dispensations invariably proceed is this: "Unto him that hath, shall be given: but from him that hath not;" that does not improve the grace already given; "shall be taken away what he assuredly hath:" (so the words ought to be rendered.) Even St. Augustine, who is generally supposed to favour the contrary doctrine, makes that just remark, *Qui fecit nos sine nobis, non salvabit nos sine nobis:* "He that made us without ourselves, will not save us without ourselves." He will not save us, unless we "save ourselves from this untoward generation;" unless we ourselves "fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life;" unless we "agonize to enter in at the strait gate," "deny ourselves, and take up our cross daily," and labour by every possible means, to "make our own calling and election sure."

8. "Labour" then, brethren, "not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth to everlasting life." Say with our blessed Lord

though in a somewhat different sense, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." In consideration that he still worketh in you, be never "weary of well doing." Go on, in virtue of the grace of God, preventing, accompanying, and following you, in "the work of faith, in the patience of hope, and the labour of love." "Be ye steadfast, and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." And "the God of peace, who brought again from the dead the great Shepherd of his sheep, [Jesus,] make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you what is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever!"

SERMON XCI.—*A Call to Backsliders.*

"Will the Lord absent himself for ever? And will he be no more entreated?
"Is his mercy clean gone for ever? And is his promise come utterly to an end, for evermore?" Psa. lxxvii, 7, 8.

1. PRESUMPTION is one grand snare of the devil, in which many of the children of men are taken. They so presume upon the mercy of God, as utterly to forget his justice. Although he has expressly declared, "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord," yet they flatter themselves, that, in the end, God will be better than his word. They imagine they may live and die in their sins, and nevertheless "escape the damnation of hell."

2. But although there are many that are destroyed by presumption, there are still more that perish by despair. I mean, by want of hope; by thinking it impossible they should escape destruction. Having many times fought against their spiritual enemies, and always been overcome, they lay down their arms; they no more contend, as they have no hope of victory. Knowing, by melancholy experience, that they have no power of themselves to help themselves, and having no expectation that God will help them, they lie down under their burden: they no longer strive; for they suppose it is impossible they should attain.

3. In this case, as in a thousand others, "the heart knoweth its own bitterness, but a stranger intermeddleth not with his grief." It is not easy for those to know it, who never felt it. For "who knoweth the things of a man, but the spirit of a man that is in him?" Who knoweth, unless by his own experience, what this sort of *wounded spirit* means? Of consequence, there are few that know how to sympathize with them that are under this sore temptation. There are few that have duly considered the case; few that are not deceived by appearances. They see men go on in a course of sin, and take it for granted, it is out of mere presumption: whereas, in reality, it is from the quite contrary principle: it is out of mere despair. Either they have no hope at all: and while that is the case, they do not strive at all; or they have some intervals of hope, and while that lasts, "strive for the mastery." But that hope soon fails: they then cease to strive, and "are taken captive of Satan at his will."

4. This is frequently the case with those that began to run well, but soon tired in the heavenly road: with those in particular, who once "saw the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ;" but afterwards

grieved his Holy Spirit, and made shipwreck of the faith. Indeed, many of these rush into sin, as a horse into the battle. They sin with so high a hand, as utterly to quench the Holy Spirit of God; so that he gives them up to their own hearts' lusts, and lets them follow their own imaginations. And those who are thus given up may be quite stupid, without either fear, or sorrow, or care; utterly easy and unconcerned about God, or heaven, or hell; to which the god of this world contributes not a little, by blinding and hardening their hearts. But still even these would not be so careless, were it not for despair. The great reason why they have no sorrow or care, is because they have no hope. They verily believe they have so provoked God, that "he will be no more intreated."

5. And yet we need not utterly give up even these. We have known some, even of the careless ones, whom God has visited again, and restored to their first love. But we may have much more hope for those backsliders who are not careless, who are still uneasy: those who fain would escape out of the snare of the devil, but think it is impossible. They are fully convinced they cannot save themselves, and believe God *will* not save them. They believe he has irrevocably "shut up his loving kindness in displeasure." They fortify themselves in believing this, by abundance of reasons; and unless those reasons are clearly removed, they cannot hope for any deliverance.

It is in order to relieve those hopeless, helpless souls, that I propose, with God's assistance,

I. To inquire, What the chief of those reasons are, some or other of which induce so many backsliders to cast away hope; to suppose that God hath forgotten to be gracious. And,

II. To give a clear and full answer to each of those reasons.

I. I am, first, to inquire, What the chief of those reasons are, which induce so many backsliders to think that God hath forgotten to be gracious. I do not say *all* the reasons: for innumerable are those which either their own evil hearts, or that old serpent will suggest; but the chief of them: those that are most plausible, and therefore most common.

1. The first argument which induces many backsliders to believe that "the Lord will be no more intreated," is drawn from the very reason of the thing: "If," say they, "a man rebel against an earthly prince, many times he dies for the first offence; he pays his life for the first transgression; yet possibly, if the crime be extenuated by some favourable circumstances, or if strong intercession be made for him, his life may be given him: but if, after a full and free pardon he were guilty of rebelling a second time, who would dare to intercede for him? He must expect no farther mercy. Now if one rebelling against an earthly king, after he has been freely pardoned once, cannot with any colour of reason hope to be forgiven a second time; what must be the case of him that, after having been freely pardoned for rebelling against the great King of heaven and earth, rebels against him again? What can be expected, but that 'vengeance will come upon him to the uttermost?'"

II. 1. This argument, drawn from reason, they enforce by several passages of Scripture. One of the strongest of these, is that which occurs in the first epistle of St. John, v, 16: "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and God shall give

him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death. I do not say that he shall pray for it."

Hence they argue, "Certainly, *I do not say that he shall pray for it* is equivalent with, *I say he shall not pray for it.* So the apostle supposes him that has committed this sin, to be in a desperate state indeed! So desperate, that we may not even pray for his forgiveness: we may not ask life for him: and what may we more reasonably suppose to be a sin unto death, than a wilful rebellion after a full and free pardon?

2. "Consider, secondly," say they, "those terrible passages in the epistle to the Hebrews; one of which occurs in the sixth chapter, the other in the tenth. To begin with the latter: 'If we sin wilfully, after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no other sacrifice for sin; but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and done despite to the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance is mine: I will recompense, saith the Lord It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!' verse 26–31. Now is it not here expressly declared by the Holy Ghost, that our case is desperate? Is it not declared, that 'if after we have received the knowledge of the truth;' after we have experimentally known it; 'we sin wilfully;' which we have undoubtedly done, and that over and over; 'there remaineth no other sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries?"

3. "And is not that passage in the sixth chapter exactly parallel with this? 'It is impossible for those that were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, —If they fall away,' (literally, *and have fallen away*,) 'to renew them again unto repentance: seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame,'" verse 4–6.

4. It is true, some are of opinion, that those words, *it is impossible*, are not to be taken literally, as denoting absolute impossibility; but a very great difficulty. But it does not appear that we have any sufficient reason to depart from the literal meaning; as it neither implies any absurdity, nor contradicts any other Scriptures. Does not this then, say they, cut off all hope; seeing we have undoubtedly "tasted of that heavenly gift, and been made partakers of the Holy Ghost?" How is it possible to "renew us again to repentance;" to an entire change both of heart and life? Seeing we have crucified to ourselves "the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."

5. A yet more dreadful passage, if possible, than this, is that in the twelfth chapter of St. Matthew: "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men: and whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him. But whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come," ver. 31, 32. Exactly parallel to these are the words of our Lord, which are recited by St. Mark: "Verily I say unto you, all sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blas-

phemies wherewith soever they blaspheme. But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost, shall never be forgiven, but is in danger of eternal damnation," chap. iii, 28, 29.

6. It has been the judgment of some, that all these passages point a one and the same sin; that not only the words of our Lord, but those of St. John, concerning "the sin unto death," and those of St. Paul, concerning "crucifying to themselves the Son of God afresh, treading under foot the Son of God, and doing despite to the Spirit of grace," all refer to the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost; the only sin that shall never be forgiven. Whether they do or no, it must be allowed that this blasphemy is absolutely unpardonable; and that, consequently, for those who have been guilty of this, God "will be no more intreated."

7. To confirm those arguments drawn from reason and Scripture, they appeal to matter of fact. They ask, "Is it not a fact, that those who fall away from justifying grace, who make 'shipwreck of the faith,' that faith whereof cometh present salvation, perish without mercy? How much less can any of those escape, who fall away from sanctifying grace? who make shipwreck of that faith, whereby they are cleansed from all pollution of flesh and spirit? Has there ever been an instance of one or the other of these being renewed again to repentance? If there be any instances of that, one would be inclined to believe that thought of our poet not to be extravagant;—

> 'Even Judas struggles his despair to quell,
> Hope almost blossoms in the shades of hell.''

III. These are the principal arguments drawn from reason, from Scripture, and from fact, whereby backsliders are wont to justify themselves, in casting away hope: in supposing that God hath utterly "shut up his loving kindness in displeasure." I have proposed them in their full strength, that we may form the better judgment concerning them, and try whether each of them may not receive a clear, full, satisfactory answer.

1. I begin with that argument which is taken from the nature of the thing: "If a man rebel against an earthly prince, he may possibly be forgiven the first time. But if, after a full and free pardon, he should rebel again, there is no hope of obtaining a second pardon: he must expect to die without mercy. Now if he that rebels again against an earthly king, can look for no second pardon, how can he look for mercy, who rebels a second time against the great King of heaven and earth?"

2. I answer: This argument drawn from the analogy between earthly and heavenly things, is plausible, but it is not solid: and that for this plain reason: analogy has no place here: there can be no analogy or proportion between the mercy of any of the children of men, and that of the most high God. "Unto whom will ye liken me, saith the Lord?" Unto whom either in heaven or earth? Who, "what is he among the gods, that shall be compared unto the Lord?" "I have said, Ye are gods," saith the psalmist, speaking to supreme magistrates; such is your dignity and power, compared to that of common men. But what are they to the God of heaven? As a bubble upon the wave. What is their power in comparison of his power? What is their mercy compared to his mercy? Hence that comfortable word, "I am God and

not man, therefore the house of Israel is not consumed." Because he is God and not man, "therefore his compassions fail not." None then can infer, that because an earthly king will not pardon one that rebels against him a second time, therefore the King of heaven will not. Yea he will; not until seven times only, or until seventy times seven. Nay, were your rebellions multiplied as the stars of heaven; were they more in number than the hairs of your head; yet, "return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon you; and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon."

3. "But does not St. John cut us off from this hope, by what he says of the 'sin unto death?' Is not, 'I do not say that he shall pray for it,' equivalent with, 'I say he shall not pray for it?' And does not this imply, that God has determined not to hear that prayer? That he will not give life to such a sinner, no, not through the prayer of a righteous man?"

4. I answer, "I do not say that he shall pray for it," certainly means, He shall not pray for it. And it doubtless implies, that God will not give life unto them that have sinned this sin: that their sentence is passed, and God has determined it shall not be revoked. It cannot be altered even by that "effectual fervent prayer," which, in other cases, "availeth much."

IV. But I ask, first, What is the sin unto death? And, secondly, What is the death which is annexed to it?

1. And, first, What is the sin unto death? It is now many years since, being among a people the most experienced in the things of God of any I had ever seen, I asked some of them, What do you understand by the "sin unto death," mentioned in the first epistle of St. John? They answered, "If any one is sick among us, he sends for the elders of the church; and they pray over him, and the prayer of faith saves the sick, and the Lord raises him up. And if he hath committed sins, which God was punishing by that sickness, they are forgiven him. But sometimes none of us can pray that God would raise him up. And we are constrained to tell him, We are afraid that you have sinned "a sin unto death;" a sin which God has determined to punish with death; we cannot pray for your recovery. And we have never yet known an instance of such a person recovering."

2. I see no absurdity at all in this interpretation of the word. It seems to be one meaning (at least) of the expression, "a sin unto death;" a sin which God is determined to punish by the death of the sinner. If, therefore, you have sinned a sin of this kind, and your sin has overtaken you; if God is chastising you by some severe disease, it will not avail to pray for your life; you are irrevocably sentenced to die. But, observe! this has no reference to eternal death. It does by no means imply that you are condemned to die the second death. No; it rather implies the contrary: the body is destroyed, that the soul may escape destruction. I have, myself, during a course of many years, seen numerous instances of this. I have known many sinners, (chiefly notorious backsliders from high degrees of holiness; and such as had given great occasion to the enemies of religion to blaspheme,) whom God has cut short in the midst of their journey; yea, before they had lived out half their days. These, I apprehend, had sinned "a sin unto death;" in consequence of which they were cut off, sometimes more

swiftly, sometimes more slowly, by an unexpected stroke. But in most of these cases, it has been observed, that "mercy rejoiced over judgment." And the persons themselves were fully convinced of the goodness as well as justice of God. They acknowledged, that he destroyed the body, in order to save the soul. Before they went hence, he healed their backsliding. So they died, that they might live for ever

3. A very remarkable instance of this occurred many years ago. A young collier in Kingswood, near Bristol, was an eminent sinner, and afterwards an eminent saint. But by little and little, he renewed his acquaintance with his old companions, who by degrees wrought upon him, till he dropped all his religion, and was two fold more a child of hell than before. One day he was working in the pit with a serious young man, who suddenly stopped and cried out, "Oh Tommy, what a man was you once! How did your words and example provoke many to love and to good works! And what are you now? What would become of you, if you were to die as you are?" "Nay, God forbid," said Thomas, "for then I should fall into hell headlong! Oh let us cry to God!" They did so for a considerable time, first the one, and then the other. They called upon God with strong cries and tears, wrestling with him in mighty prayer. After some time, Thomas broke out, "Now I know God hath healed my backsliding. I know again, that my Redeemer liveth, and that he hath washed me from my sins with his own blood. I am willing to go to him." Instantly part of the pit caved in, and crushed him to death in a moment. Whoever thou art that hast sinned "a sin unto death," lay this to heart! It may be, God will require thy soul of thee in an hour when thou lookest not for it! But if he doth, there is mercy in the midst of judgment: thou shalt not die eternally.

4. "But what say you to that other scripture, namely, the tenth of the Hebrews? Does that leave any hope to notorious backsliders, that they shall not die eternally: that they can ever recover the favour of God, or escape the damnation of hell? 'If we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no other sacrifice for sins; but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and done despite unto the Spirit of grace?'

5. "And is not the same thing, namely, the desperate, irrecoverable state of wilful backsliders, fully confirmed by that parallel passage in the sixth chapter? 'It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and partakers of the Holy Ghost,—and have fallen away, [so it is in the original,] to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.'"

6. These passages seem to me parallel to each other, and deserve our deepest consideration. And in order to understand them, it will be necessary to know, 1. Who are the persons here spoken of; and, 2. What is the sin they had committed, which made their case nearly, if not quite desperate.

As to the first, it will be clear to all who impartially consider and compare both these passages, that the persons spoken of herein, are those, and those only, that have been justified; that the eyes of their understanding were opened and "enlightened," to see the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. These only "have tasted of the heavenly gift," remission of sins, eminently so called. These "were made partakers of the Holy Ghost," both of the witness and the fruit of the Spirit. This character cannot, with any propriety, be applied to any but those that have been justified.

And they had been sanctified too: at least, in the first degree; as far as all are who receive remission of sins. So the second passage expressly, "Who hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing."

7. Hence it follows, that this scripture concerns those alone who have been justified, and at least in part sanctified. Therefore all of you, who never were thus "enlightened" with the light of the glory of God; all who never did "taste of the heavenly gift," who never received remission of sins; all who never "were made partakers of the Holy Ghost;" of the witness and fruit of the Spirit;—in a word, all you, who never were sanctified by the blood of the everlasting covenant; you are not concerned here. Whatever other passages of Scripture may condemn you, it is certain, you are not condemned either by the sixth or the tenth of the Hebrews. For both of those passages speak wholly and solely of apostates from the faith, which you never had. Therefore, it was not possible that you should lose it, for you could not lose what you had not. Therefore, whatever judgments are denounced in these scriptures, they are not denounced against *you*. You are not the persons here described, against whom only they are denounced.

8. Inquire we next, What was the sin which the persons here described were guilty of? In order to understand this, we should remember, that whenever the Jews prevailed on a Christian to apostatize, they required him to declare, in express terms, and that in the public assembly, that Jesus of Nazareth was a deceiver of the people; and that he had suffered no more punishment than his crimes justly deserved. This is the sin which St. Paul, in the first passage, terms emphatically "falling away;" "crucifying the Son of God afresh, and putting him to an open shame." This is that which he terms in the second, "Counting the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, treading under foot the Son of God, and doing despite to the Spirit of grace." Now which of you has thus fallen away? Which of you has thus "crucified the Son of God afresh?" Not one: nor has one of you thus "put him to an open shame." If you had thus formally renounced that "only sacrifice for sin," there had no other sacrifice remained; so that you must have perished without mercy. But this is not your case. Not one of you has thus renounced that sacrifice, by which the Son of God made a full and perfect satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. Bad as you are, you shudder at the thought: therefore that sacrifice still remains for you. Come then, cast away your needless fears! "Come boldly to the throne of grace!" The way is still open. You shall again "obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

V. 1. "But do not the well known words of our Lord himself, cut us off from all hope of mercy? Does he not say, 'All manner of sin and

blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh a word against the Holy Ghost, it shall never be forgiven him neither in this world, nor in the world to come?' Therefore, it is plain if we have been guilty of this sin, there is no room for mercy. And is not the same thing repeated by St. Mark, almost in the same words? Verily I say unto you,' (a solemn preface! always denoting the great importance of that which follows,) 'All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme. but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is under the sentence of eternal damnation.'"

2. How immense is the number in every nation, throughout the Christian world, of those who have been more or less distressed on account of this scripture? What multitudes in this kingdom have been perplexed above measure upon this very account? Nay, there are few that are truly convinced of sin, and seriously endeavour to save their souls, who have not felt some uneasiness, for fear they had committed, or should commit, this unpardonable sin. What has frequently increased their uneasiness was, that they could hardly find any to comfort them. For their acquaintances, even the most religious of them, understood no more of the matter than themselves; and they could not find any writer, who had published any thing satisfactory upon the subject. Indeed in the "Seven Sermons" of Mr. Russell, which are common among us, there is one expressly written upon it: but it will give little satisfaction to a troubled spirit. He talks *about it, and about it*, but makes nothing out: he takes much pains, but misses the mark at last.

3. But was there ever in the world a more deplorable proof of the littleness of human understanding, even in those that have honest hearts, and are desirous of knowing the truth! How is it possible, that any one who reads his Bible, can one hour remain in doubt concerning it, when our Lord himself, in the very passage cited above, has so clearly told us, what that blasphemy is? "He that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, hath never forgiveness; because, they said, he hath an unclean spirit," verses 29, 30. This then, and this alone, (if we allow our Lord to understand his own meaning,) is the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost: *the saying, he had an unclean spirit;* the affirming that Christ wrought his miracles by the power of an evil spirit; or more particularly, that "he cast out devils, by Beelzebub, the prince of devils." Now have *you* been guilty of this? Have *you* affirmed, that he cast out devils by the prince of devils? No more than you have cut your neighbour's throat, and set his house on fire. How marvellously then have you been afraid, where no fear is! Dismiss that vain terror: let your fear be more rational for the time to come. Be afraid of giving way to pride; be afraid of yielding to anger; be afraid of loving the world, or the things of the world: be afraid of foolish and hurtful desires; but never more be afraid of committing the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost! You are in no more danger of doing this, than of pulling the sun out of the firmament.

4. Ye have then no reason from Scripture, for imagining that "the Lord hath forgotten to be gracious." The arguments drawn from thence, you see, are of no weight, are utterly inconclusive. Is there

any more weight in that which has been drawn from experience or matter of fact?

5. This is a point which may exactly be determined; and that with the utmost certainty. If it be asked, "Do any real apostates find mercy from God? Do any that have 'made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience,' recover what they have lost? Do you know, have you seen any instance of persons, who found redemption in the blood of Jesus, and afterwards fell away, and yet were restored,—'renewed again to repentance?'" Yea, verily: and not one, or a hundred only, but, I am persuaded, several thousands. In every place where the arm of the Lord has been revealed, and many sinners converted to God, there are several found, who "turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them." For a great part of these "it had been better never to have known the way of righteousness." It only increases their damnation, seeing they die in their sins. But others there are, who "look unto him they have pierced, and mourn," refusing to be comforted. And, sooner or later he surely lifts up the light of his countenance upon them: he strengthens the hands that hang down, and confirms the feeble knees. He teaches them again to say, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour." Innumerable are the instances of this kind, of those who had fallen, but now stand upright. Indeed it is so far from being an uncommon thing, for a believer to fall and be restored, that it is rather uncommon to find any believers who are not conscious of having been backsliders from God; in a higher or lower degree; and perhaps more than once, before they were established in faith.

6. "But have any that had fallen from sanctifying grace, been restored to the blessing they had lost?" This also is a point of experience: and we have had the opportunity of repeating our observations during a considerable course of years, and from the one end of the kingdom to the other.

7. And, first, we have known a large number of persons, of every age and sex, from early childhood, to extreme old age, who have given all the proofs, which the nature of the thing admits, that they were "sanctified throughout;" "cleansed from all pollution both of flesh and spirit;" that they "loved the Lord their God with all their heart, and mind, and soul, and strength;" that they continually "presented" their souls and bodies "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God:" in consequence of which, they "rejoiced evermore, prayed without ceasing, and in every thing gave thanks." And this, and no other, is what we believe to be true, scriptural sanctification.

8. Secondly, It is a common thing for those who are thus sanctified, to believe they cannot fall: to suppose themselves "pillars in the temple of God, that shall go out no more." Nevertheless we have seen some of the strongest of them, after a time, moved from their steadfastness. Sometimes suddenly, but oftener by slow degrees, they have yielded to temptation; and pride, or anger, or foolish desires have again sprung up in their hearts. Nay, sometimes they have utterly lost the life of God, and sin hath regained dominion over them.

9. Yet, thirdly, several of these, after being thoroughly sensible of their fall, and deeply ashamed before God, have been again filled with his love, and not only perfected therein, but stablished, strengthened

and settled. They have received the blessing they had before, with abundant increase. Nay, it is remarkable, that many who had fallen either from justifying or from sanctifying grace, and so deeply fallen that they could hardly be ranked among the servants of God, have been restored, (but seldom till they had been shaken, as it were, over the mouth of hell,) and that, very frequently in an instant, to all that they had lost. They have, at once, recovered both a consciousness of his favour and the experience of the pure love of God. In one moment they received anew, both remission of sins, and a lot among them that were sanctified.

10. But let not any man infer from this long suffering of God, that he hath given any one a license to sin. Neither let any dare to continue in sin, because of these extraordinary instances of divine mercy. This is the most desperate, the most irrational presumption, and leads to utter, irrecoverable destruction. In all my experience, I have not known one, who fortified himself in sin by a presumption that God would save him at the last, that was not miserably disappointed, and suffered to die in his sins. To turn the grace of God into an encouragement to sin, is the sure way to the nethermost hell!

11. It is not for these desperate children of perdition, that the preceding considerations are designed; but for those who feel "the remembrance of their sins is grievous unto them, the burden of them is intolerable." We set before these an open door of hope: let them go in and give thanks unto the Lord. Let them know that "the Lord is gracious and merciful; longs uffering, and of great goodness." "Look how high the heavens are from the earth! so far will he set their sins from them." "He will not always be chiding; neither keepeth he his anger for ever." Only settle it in your heart, *I will give all for all*, and the offering shall be accepted. Give him all your heart! Let all that is within you continually cry out, "thou art my God, and I will thank thee: thou art my God and I will praise thee.' "This God is my God for ever and ever! He shall be my guide even unto death."

Sermon XCII.—*The Danger of Riches*

"They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful desires, which drown men in destruction and perdition," 1 Tim. vi, 9.

1. How innumerable are the ill consequences which have followed from men's not knowing, or not considering, this great truth! And how few are there even in the Christian world, that either know or duly consider it! Yea, how small is the number of those, even among real Christians, who understand and lay it to heart! Most of these too pass it very lightly over, scarce remembering there is such a text in the Bible And many put such a construction upon it, as makes it of no manner of effect. "They that will be rich," say they, that is, will be rich at all events; who will be rich, right or wrong; that are resolved to carry their point, to compass this end, whatever means they use to attain it; they "*fall into temptation*," and into all the evils enumerated by the apostle. But truly if this were all the meaning of the text, it might as well have been out of the Bible.

2. This is so far from being the whole meaning of the text, that it is no part of its meaning. The apostle does not here speak of gaining riches unjustly, but of quite another thing: his words are to be taken in their plain obvious sense, without any restriction or qualification whatsoever. St. Paul does not say, that they will be rich *by evil means*, by theft, robbery, oppression, or extortion; they that will be rich by fraud or dishonest art; but simply, "they that will be rich:" these, allowing, supposing the means they use to be ever so innocent, "fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful desires, which drown men in destruction and perdition."

3. But who believes that? Who receives it as the truth of God? Who is deeply convinced of it? Who preaches this? Great is the company of preachers at this day, regular and irregular; but who of them all, openly and explicitly, preaches this strange doctrine? It is the keen observation of a great man, "The pulpit is the preacher's strong hold." But who even in this strong hold has the courage to declare so unfashionable a truth? I do not remember that in three score years, I have heard one sermon preached upon this subject. And what author, within the same term, has declared it from the press? At least in the English tongue? I do not know one. I have neither seen nor heard of any such author. I have seen two or three who have just touched upon it: but none that treats of it professedly. I have myself frequently touched upon it in preaching, and thrice in what I have published to the world: once in explaining our Lord's sermon on the mount, and once in the discourse on the "mammon of unrighteousness:" but I have never yet either published or preached any sermon expressly upon the subject. It is high time I should;—that I should at length speak as strongly and explicitly as I can, in order to leave a full and clear testimony behind me, whenever it pleases God to call me hence.

4. Oh that God would give me to speak right and forcible words, and you to receive them in honest and humble hearts! Let it not be said, "They sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words: but they will not do them. Thou art unto them as one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but do them not!" Oh that ye may "not be forgetful hearers, but doers of the word," that ye may be "blessed in your deed!" In this hope I shall endeavour,

I. To explain the apostle's words. And,

II. To apply them.

But, oh! "who is sufficient for these things?" Who is able to stem the general torrent? To combat all the prejudices not only of the vulgar, but of the learned and of the religious world? Yet nothing is too hard for God! Still his grace is sufficient for us. In his name then, and by his strength, I will endeavour,

I. To explain the words of the apostle.

1. And, first, let us consider, what it is to be rich? What does the apostle mean by this expression?

The preceding verse fixes the meaning of that; "Having food and raiment," (literally *coverings;* for the word includes lodging as well as clothes,) "let us be therewith content." "But they that will be rich;" that is, who will have more than these; more than food and coverings.—It plainly follows, whatever is more than these, is in the sense of the

apostle, *riches;* whatever is above the plain necessaries, or, at most, conveniences of life. Whoever has sufficient food to eat, and raiment to put on, with a place where to lay his head, and something over, is *rich.*

2. Let us consider, secondly, what is implied in that expression "they that will be rich." And does not this imply, first, they that desire to be rich; to have more than *food* and *coverings:* they that seriously and deliberately desire more than food to eat, and raiment to put on, and a place where to lay their head; more than the plain necessaries and conveniences of life? All, at least, who allow themselves in this desire, who see no harm in it, desire to be rich.

3. And so do, secondly, all those that calmly, deliberately, and of set purpose, *endeavour* after more than food and coverings; that aim at and endeavour after, not only so much worldly substance as will procure them the necessaries and conveniences of life, but more than this, whether to lay it up, or lay it out in superfluities. All these undeniably prove their *desire to be rich,* by their endeavours after it.

4. Must we not, thirdly, rank among those that desire to be rich, all that, in fact, "*lay up treasures on earth?*" a thing as expressly and clearly forbidden by our Lord, as either adultery or murder. It is allowed, 1. That we are to provide necessaries and conveniences for those of our own household: 2. That men in business are to lay up as much as is necessary for the carrying on of that business: 3. That we are to leave our children what will supply them with necessaries and conveniences after we have left the world: and, 4. That we are to provide things honest in the sight of all men, so as to "owe no man any thing:" but to lay up any more when this is done, is what our Lord has flatly forbidden. When it is calmly and deliberately done, it is a clear proof of our desiring to be rich. And thus to lay up money is no more consistent with a good conscience, than to throw it into the sea.

5. We must rank among them, fourthly, all who *possess* more of this world's goods, than they use according to the will of the donor: I should rather say, of the proprietor; for he only *lends* them to us as stewards; reserving the *property* of them to himself. And, indeed, he cannot possibly do otherwise, seeing they are the work of his hands; he is, and must be, the possessor of heaven and earth. This is his unalienable right; a right he cannot divest himself of. And together with that portion of his goods, which he hath lodged in our hands, he has delivered to us a writing, specifying the purposes for which he has intrusted us with them. If, therefore, we keep more of them in our hands, than is necessary for the preceding purposes, we certainly fall under the charge of "desiring to be rich:" over and above we are guilty of burying our Lord's talent in the earth; and on that account are liable to be pronounced wicked, because unprofitable servants.

6. Under this imputation of "desiring to be rich," fall, fifthly, all "*lovers of money.*" The word properly means, those that *delight in money;* those that take pleasure in it; those that seek their happiness therein; that brood over their gold and silver, bills or bonds. Such was the man described by the fine Roman painter, who broke out in that natural soliloquy;

> "Populus me sibilat, at mihi plaudo
> Ipse domi quoties nummos contemplor in arcâ."

If there are any vices which are not natural to man, I should imagine this is one: as money of itself does not seem to gratify any natural desire or appetite of the human mind; and as, during an observation of sixty years, I do not remember one instance, of a man given up to the love of money, till he had neglected to employ this precious talent, according to the will of his Master. After this, sin was punished by sin; and this evil spirit was permitted to enter into him.

7. But besides this gross sort of covetousness, the love of money, there is a more refined species of covetousness, mentioned by the great apostle; πλεονεξια: which literally means, *a desire of having more;* more than we have already. And those also come under the denomination of, "they that will be rich." It is true that this desire, under proper restrictions, is innocent; nay, commendable. But when it exceeds the bounds, (and how difficult is it not to exceed them!) then it comes under the present censure.

8. But who is able to receive these hard sayings? Who can believe that they are the great truths of God? Not many wise, not many noble, not many famed for learning; none, indeed, who are not taught of God And who are they, whom God teaches? Let our Lord answer: "If any man be willing to do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." Those who are otherwise minded, will be so far from receiving it, that they will not be able to understand it. Two as sensible men as most in England, sat down together, some time since, to read over and consider that plain discourse on, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth." After much deep consideration, one of them broke out, "Positively, I cannot understand it. Pray do *you* understand it, Mr. L.?" Mr. L. honestly replied, "Indeed, not I. I cannot conceive what Mr. W. means. I can make nothing at all of it.' So utterly blind is our natural understanding touching the truth of God!

9. Having explained the former part of the text, "They that will be rich," and pointed out, in the clearest manner I could, the persons spoken of; I will now endeavour, God being my helper, to explain what is spoken of them: "They fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtfu' desires, which drown men in destruction and perdition."

"They fall into *temptation.*" This seems to mean much more than simply, they are tempted. They *enter into the temptation:* they fall plump down into it. The waves of it compass them about, and cover them all over. Of those who thus enter into temptation, very few escape out of it. And the few that do are sorely scorched by it, though not utterly consumed. If they escape at all, it is with the skin of their teeth, and with deep wounds that are not easily healed.

10. They fall, secondly, into "*a snare,*" the snare of the devil, which he hath purposely set in their way. I believe the Greek word properly means a gin, a steel trap, which shows no appearance of danger. But as soon as any creature touches the spring, it suddenly closes; and either crushes its bones in pieces, or consigns it to inevitable ruin.

11. They fall thirdly, "*into many foolish and hurtful desires;*" ανοητους: *silly, senseless, fantastic;* as contrary to reason, to sound understanding, as they are to religion: *hurtful,* both to body and soul, tending to weaken, yea, destroy every gracious and heavenly temper: destructive of that faith which is of the operation of God; of that hope

which is full of immortality; of love to God and to our neighbour, and of every good word and work.

12. But what desires are these? This is a most important question, and deserves the deepest consideration.

In general, they may all be summed up in one, the desiring happiness out of God. This includes, directly or remotely, every foolish and hurtful desire. St. Paul expresses it by "loving the creature more than the Creator;" and by being "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." In particular, they are, (to use the exact and beautiful enumeration of St. John,) "the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life:" all of which, the desire of riches naturally tends both to beget and to increase.

13. "*The desire of the flesh*" is generally understood in far too narrow a meaning. It does not, as is commonly supposed, refer to one of the senses only; but takes in all the pleasures of sense; the gratification of any of the outward senses. It has reference to the *taste* in particular. How many thousands do we find at this day, in whom the ruling principle is the desire to enlarge the pleasure of tasting? Perhaps they do not gratify this desire in a gross manner, so as to incur the imputation of intemperance; much less so as to violate health, or impair their understanding by gluttony or drunkenness: but they live in a genteel, regular sensuality; in an elegant epicurism, which does not hurt the body, but only destroys the soul; keeping it at a distance from all true religion.

14. Experience shows, that the imagination is gratified chiefly by means of the eyes: therefore, "*the desire of the eyes*," in its natural sense, is, the desiring and seeking happiness in gratifying the imagination. Now the imagination is gratified either by grandeur, by beauty, or by novelty: chiefly by the last: for neither grand nor beautiful objects please, any longer than they are new.

15. Seeking happiness in *learning*, of whatever kind, falls under "the desire of the eyes;" whether it be in history, languages, poetry, or any branch of natural or experimental philosophy: yea, we must include the several kinds of learning, such as geometry, algebra, and metaphysics. For if our supreme delight be in any of these, we are herein gratifying "the desire of the eyes."

16. "*The pride of life*," (whatever else that very uncommon expression, η αλαζονεια του βιου, may mean,) seems to imply chiefly, the *desire of honour*; of the esteem, admiration, and applause of men: as nothing more directly tends both to beget and cherish pride than the honour that cometh of men. And as riches attract much admiration, and occasion much applause, they proportionably minister food for pride, and so may also be referred to this head.

17. *Desire of ease*, is another of these foolish and hurtful desires: desire of avoiding every cross, every degree of trouble, danger, difficulty; a desire of slumbering out life, and going to heaven (as the vulgar say) upon a feather bed. Every one may observe, how riches first beget and then confirm and increase this desire, making men more and more soft and delicate; more unwilling, and indeed more unable, to "take up their cross daily;" to "endure hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ," and to "take the kingdom of heaven by violence."

18. Riches, either desired or possessed, naturally lead to some or other of these foolish and hurtful desires; and by affording the means

of gratifying them all, naturally tend to increase them. And there is a near connection between unholy desires, and every other unholy passion and temper We easily pass from these to pride, anger, bitterness envy, malice, revengefulness; to a headstrong, unadvisable, unreprovable spirit: indeed, to every temper that is earthly, sensual, or devilish. All these, the desire or possession of riches naturally tends to create, strengthen, and increase.

19. And by so doing, in the same proportion as they prevail they 'pierce men through with many sorrows:" sorrows from remorse, from a guilty conscience; sorrows flowing from all the evil tempers which they inspire or increase; sorrows inseparable from those desires themselves, as every unholy desire is an uneasy desire; and sorrows from the contrariety of those desires to each other, whence it is impossible to gratify them all. And, in the end, "they drown" the body in pain, disease, "destruction," and the soul in everlasting "perdition."

II. 1. I am, in the second place, to apply what has been said. And this is the principal point. For what avails the clearest knowledge, even of the most excellent things, even of the things of God, if it go no farther than speculation; if it be not reduced to practice? He that hath ears to hear, let him hear! And what he hears, let him instantly put in practice. Oh that God would give me the thing which I long for! That before I go hence and am no more seen, I may see a people wholly devoted to God, crucified to the world, and the world crucified to them! A people truly given up to God, in body, soul, and substance! How cheerfully should I then say, "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace!"

2. I ask then, in the name of God, who of you "desire to be rich?" Which of *you*, (ask your own hearts in the sight of God,) seriously and deliberately desire (and perhaps applaud yourselves for so doing, as no small instance of your *prudence*) to have more than food to eat, and raiment to put on, and a house to cover you? Who of you desires to have more than the plain necessaries and conveniences of life? Stop! Consider! What are you doing? Evil is before you! Will you rush upon the point of a sword? By the grace of God turn and live!

3. By the same authority I ask, who of you are *endeavouring* to be rich? To procure for yourselves more than the plain necessaries and conveniences of life? Lay, each of you, your hand to your heart, and seriously inquire, Am I of that number? Am I labouring, not only for what I want, but for more than I want? May the Spirit of God say to every one whom it concerns, "Thou art the man!"

4. I ask, thirdly, who of you are, in fact, *laying up for yourselves treasures upon earth?* Increasing in goods? Adding, as fast as you can, house to house, and field to field? As long as *thou* thus "doest well unto thyself, men will speak good of thee." They will call thee a wise, a prudent man! A man that *minds the main chance.* Such is, and always has been, the wisdom of the world! But God saith unto thee, "Thou fool!" Art thou not "treasuring up to thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God?"

5. Perhaps you will ask, "But do not you yourself advise, to gain all we can, and to save all we can? And is it possible to do this, without both *desiring* and *endeavouring to be rich?* Nay, suppose your

endeavours are successful, without actually laying up treasures upon earth?

I answer, it is possible. You may gain all you can, without hurting either your soul or body; you may save all you can, by carefully avoiding every needless expense, and yet never lay up treasures on earth nor either desire or endeavour so to do.

6. Permit me to speak as freely of myself, as I would of another man I *gain all I can*, (namely, by writing,) without hurting either my soul or body. I *save all I can*, not willingly wasting any thing, not a sheet of paper, not a cup of water. I do not lay out any thing, not a shilling, unless as a sacrifice to God. Yet by *giving all I can*, I am effectually secured from "laying up treasures upon earth." Yea, and I am secured from either desiring or endeavouring it, as long as I give all I can. And that I do this, I call all that know me, both friends and foes to testify.

7. But some may say, "Whether you endeavour it or no, you are undeniably *rich*. You have more than the necessaries of life." I have. But the apostle does not fix the charge, barely on *possessing* any quantity of goods, but on possessing more than we employ according to the will of the donor.

Two and forty years ago, having a desire to furnish poor people with cheaper, shorter, and plainer books than any I had seen, I wrote many small tracts, generally a penny a-piece; and afterwards several larger. Some of these had such a sale as I never thought of; and by this means, I unawares became rich. But I never desired or endeavoured after it. And now that it is come upon me unawares, I lay up no treasures upon earth: I lay up nothing at all. My desire and endeavour, in this respect is, to "wind my bottom round the year." I cannot help leaving my books behind me whenever God calls me hence. But in every other respect, my own hands will be my executors.

8. Herein, my brethren, let you that are rich, be even as I am. Do you that possess more than food and raiment, ask, "What shall we do? Shall we throw into the sea what God hath given us?" God forbid that you should! It is an excellent talent: it may be employed much to the glory of God. Your way lies plain before your face; if you have courage, walk in it. Having *gained*, in a right sense, *all you can*, and *saved all you can:* in spite of nature, and custom, and worldly prudence, *give all you can.* I do not say, Be a good Jew; giving a tenth of all you possess. I do not say, Be a good Pharisee; giving a fifth of all your substance. I dare not advise you, to give half of what you have; no, nor three quarters; but all! Lift up your hearts, and you will see clearly, in what sense this is to be done. If you desire to be "a faithful and a wise steward," out of that portion of your Lord's goods, which he has for the present lodged in your hands, but with the right of resumption whenever it pleaseth him, 1. Provide things needful for yourself; food to eat, raiment to put on; whatever nature moderately requires, for preserving you both in health and strength: 2. Provide these for your wife, your children, your servants, or any others who pertain to your household. If, when this is done, there is an overplus left, then do good to "them that are of the household of faith." If there be an overplus still, "as you have opportunity, do good unto all men." In so doing, you *give all you can:* nay, in a

sound sense, all you have. For all that is laid out in this manner, is really given to God. You render unto God the things that are God's, not only by what you give to the poor, but also by that which you expend in providing things needful for yourself and your household.*

9. Oh ye Methodists, hear the word of the Lord! I have a message from God to all men; but to *you* above all. For above forty years I have been a servant to you and to your fathers. And I have not been as a reed shaken with the wind: I have not varied in my testimony. I have testified to you the very same thing, from the first day even until now. But "who hath believed our report?" I fear not many rich, I fear there is need to apply to some of *you* those terrible words of the apostle, "Go to now, ye rich men! weep and howl for the miseries which shall come upon you. Your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall witness against you, and shall eat your flesh, as it were fire." Certainly it will, unless ye both save all you can, and give all you can. But who of you hath considered this, since you first heard the will of the Lord concerning it? Who is now determined to consider and practise it? By the grace of God, begin to day!

10. Oh ye lovers of money, hear the word of the Lord! Suppose ye that money, though multiplied as the sand of the sea, can give happiness? Then you are "given up to a strong delusion, to believe a lie:" a palpable lie, confuted daily by a thousand experiments. Open your eyes! Look all around you! Are the richest men the happiest? Have those the largest share of content, who have the largest possessions? Is not the very reverse true? Is it not a common observation, That the richest of men are, in general, the most discontented, the most miserable? Had not the far greater part of them more content, when they had less money? Look into your own breasts. If you are increased in goods, are you proportionably increased in happiness? You have more substance: but have you more content? You know that in seeking happiness from riches, you are only striving to drink out of empty cups. And let them be painted and gilded ever so finely, they are empty still.

11. Oh ye that *desire* or *endeavour to be rich*, hear ye the word of the Lord! Why should ye be stricken any more? Will not even experience teach you wisdom? Will ye leap into a pit with your eyes open? Why should you any more *fall into temptation?* It cannot be, but temptation will beset you, as long as you are in the body. But though it should beset you on every side, why will you *enter into* it? There is no necessity for this: it is your own voluntary act and deed. Why should you any more plunge yourselves *into a snare*, into the trap Satan has laid for you, that is ready to break your bones in pieces; to crush your soul to death? After fair warning, why should you sink any more into *foolish and hurtful desires?* Desires as inconsistent with reason, as they are with religion itself. Desires that have done you more hurt already, than all the treasures upon earth can countervail.

12. Have they not hurt you already, have they not wounded you in the tenderest part, by slackening, if not utterly destroying, your 'hunger and thirst after righteousness?" Have you now the same longing that you had once, for the whole image of God? Have you the same vehement desire as you formerly had, of "going on unto

* Works, edit. Lond. vol. iv, p. 56.

perfection?" Have they not hurt you by weakening your *faith?* Have you now faith's "abiding impression, realizing things to come?" Do you endure, in all temptations, from pleasure or pain, "seeing him that is invisible?" Have you every day, and every hour, an uninterrupted sense of his presence? Have they not hurt you with regard to your *hope?* Have you now a hope full of immortality? Are you still big with earnest expectation of all the great and precious promises? Do you now "taste the powers of the world to come?" Do you "sit in heavenly places with Christ Jesus?"

13. Have they not so hurt you, as to stab your religion to the heart? Have they not cooled (if not quenched) your *love of God?* This is easily determined. Have you the same delight in God which you once had? Can you now say,

"I nothing want beneath, above,
Happy, happy, in thy love!"

I fear not. And if your love of God is in any wise decayed, so is also your love of your neighbour. You are then hurt in the very life and spirit of your religion! If you lose love, you lose all.

14. Are not you hurt with regard to your *humility?* If you are increased in goods, it cannot well be otherwise. Many will think you a better, because you are a richer man; and how can you help thinking so yourself? Especially, considering the commendations which some will give you in simplicity, and many with a design to serve themselves of you.

If you are hurt in your humility, it will appear by this token: you are not so teachable as you were, not so advisable: you are not so easy to be convinced; not so easy to be persuaded: you have a much better opinion of your own judgment, and are more attached to your own will. Formerly one might guide you with a thread: now one cannot turn you with a cart rope. You were glad to be admonished or reproved: but that time is past. And you now account a man your enemy because he tells you the truth. Oh let each of you calmly consider this, and see if it be not your own picture!

15. Are you not equally hurt, with regard to your *meekness?* You had once learned an excellent lesson of him that was meek as well as lowly in heart. When you were reviled, you reviled not again. You did not return railing for railing, but contrariwise, blessing. Your love was *not provoked*, but enabled you on all occasions to overcome evil with good. Is this your case now? I am afraid not. I fear, you cannot "bear all things." Alas, it may rather be said, you can bear nothing: no injury, nor even affront! How quickly are you ruffled! How readily does that occur, "What! to use *me* so! What insolence is this! How did he dare to do it? I am not now what I was once. Let him know, I am now able to defend myself." You mean, to revenge yourself. And it is much, if you are not willing, as well as able; if you do not take your fellow servant by the throat.

16. And are you not hurt in your *patience* too? Does your love now "endure all things?" Do you still, "in patience possess your soul," as when you first believed? Oh what a change is here! You have again learned to be frequently out of humour. You are often fretful: you feel, nay, and give way to peevishness. You find abundance of things go so cross, that you cannot tell how to bear them.

Many years ago I was sitting with a gentleman in London, who feared God greatly; and generally gave away, year by year, nine tenths of his yearly income. A servant came in and threw some coals on the fire. A puff of smoke came out. The baronet threw himself back in his chair and cried out, "Oh Mr. Wesley, these are the crosses I meet with daily!" Would he not have been less impatient, if he had had fifty, instead of five thousand pounds a year?

17. But to return Are not you, who have been successful in your endeavours to increase in substance, insensibly sunk into softness of mind, if not of body too? You no longer rejoice to "endure hardship, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ!" You no longer "rush into the kingdom of heaven, and take it as by storm." You do not cheerfully and gladly "deny yourselves, and take up your cross daily." You cannot deny yourself the poor pleasure of a little sleep, or of a soft bed, in order to hear the word that is able to save your souls! Indeed, you "cannot go out so early in the morning: besides it is dark: nay, cold. perhaps rainy too. Cold, darkness, rain: all these together, I can never think of it." You did not say so when you were a poor man. You then regarded none of these things. It is the change of circumstances which has occasioned this melancholy change in your body and mind: you are but the shadow of what you were! What have riches done for you?

"But it cannot be expected I should do as I have done. For I am now grown old." Am not I grown old as well as you? Am not I in my seventy-eighth year? Yet, by the grace of God, I do not slack my pace yet. Neither would *you*, if you were a poor man still.

18. You are so deeply hurt, that you have nigh lost your zeal for works of mercy, as well as of piety. You once pushed on, through cold or rain, or whatever cross lay in your way, to see the poor, the sick, the distressed. You went about doing good, and found out those who were not able to find you. You cheerfully crept down into their cellars, and climbed up into their garrets,

> "To supply all their wants,
> And spend and be spent in assisting his saints."

You found out every scene of human misery, and assisted, according to your power:

> "Each form of wo your generous pity moved;
> Your Saviour's face you saw, and seeing, loved."

Do you now tread in the same steps? What hinders? Do you fear spoiling your silken coat? Or is there another lion in the way? Are you afraid of catching vermin? And are you not afraid, lest the roaring lion should catch you! Are you not afraid of him that hath said, "Inasmuch as ye have not done it unto the least of these, ye have not done it unto me?" What will follow? "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!"

19. In time past how mindful were you of that word, "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart: thou shalt in any wise reprove thy brother, and not suffer sin upon him!" You *did* reprove, directly or indirectly, all those that sinned in your sight. And happy consequences quickly followed. How good was a word spoken in season! It was often as an arrow from the hand of a giant. Many a heart was pierced Many of the stout hearted, who scorned to hear a sermon,

"Fell down before his cross subdued,
And felt his arrows dipt in blood."

But which of you now has that compassion for the ignorant, and for them that are out of the way? They may wander on for *you*, and plunge into the lake of fire, without let or hinderance. Gold hath steeled your hearts. You have something else to do. "Unhelped, unpitied let the wretches fall."

20. Thus have I given you, oh ye gainers, lovers, possessors of riches, one more (it may be the last) warning. Oh that it may not be in vain! May God write it upon all your hearts! Though "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven," yet the things impossible with men, are possible with God. Lord, speak! And even the rich men, that hear these words, shall enter thy kingdom; shall "take the kingdom of heaven by violence;" shall "sell all for the pearl of great price;" shall be "crucified to the world, and count all things dung, that they may win Christ!"

Sermon XCIII.—*On Dress.*

"Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of—wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel.

"But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price," 1 Pet. iii, 3, 4.

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1. St. Paul exhorts all those who desire to "be transformed by the renewal of their minds," and to "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God," "not to be conformed to this world." Indeed this exhortation relates more directly to the *wisdom* of the world, which is totally opposite to his "good, and acceptable, and perfect will." But it likewise has a reference, even to the *manners* and *customs* of the world, which naturally flow from its wisdom and spirit, and are exactly suitable thereto. And it was not beneath the wisdom of God, to give us punctual directions in this respect also.

2. Some of these, particularly that in the text, descend even to the apparel of Christians. And both this text, and the parallel one of St. Paul, are as express as possible. St. Paul's words are, 1 Tim. ii, 9, 13, "I will that women adorn themselves in modest apparel: not ..... with gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works."

3. But is it not strange, say some, that the all-wise Spirit of God should condescend to take notice of such trifles as these? To take notice of such insignificant trifles? Things of so little moment; or rather of none at all? For what does it signify, provided we take care of the soul, what the body is covered with? Whether with silk or sackcloth? What harm can there be in the wearing of gold, or silver, or precious stones; or any other of those beautiful things, with which God has so amply provided us? May we not apply to this what St. Paul has observed on another occasion, That "every creature of God is good, and nothing to be rejected?"

4. It is certain, that many who sincerely fear God have cordially embraced this opinion. And their practice is suitable thereto: they make no scruple of conformity to the world; by putting on, as often as occasion offers, either gold, or pearls, or costly apparel. And indeed they are not well pleased with those that think it their duty to reject them; the using of which they apprehend to be one branch of Christian liberty. Yea, some have gone considerably farther; even so far, as to make it a point to bring those who had refrained from them for some time, to make use of them again; assuring them, that it was mere superstition to think there was any harm in them. Nay, farther still: a very respectable person has said, in express terms, "I do not desire that any who *dress plain*, should be in our society." It is, therefore, certainly worth our while to consider this matter thoroughly: seriously to inquire, whether there is any harm in the putting on of gold, or jewels, or costly apparel?

5. But before we enter on the subject, let it be observed, that slovenliness is no part of religion: that neither this, nor any text of Scripture, condemns neatness of apparel. Certainly this is a duty; not a sin. "Cleanliness is, indeed, next to godliness." Agreeably to this, good Mr. Herbert advises every one that fears God;

> "Let thy mind's sweetness have its operation
> Upon thy person, clothes, and habitation."

And surely every one should attend to this, if he would not have the good that is in him evil spoken of.

6. Another mistake, with regard to apparel, has been common in the religious world. It has been supposed by some, that there ought to be no difference at all in the apparel of Christians. But neither these texts, nor any other in the book of God, teach any such thing, or direct that the dress of the master or the mistress should be nothing different from that of their servants. There may, undoubtedly, be a moderate difference of apparel between persons of different stations. And where the eye is single, this will easily be adjusted by the rules of Christian prudence.

7. Yea, it may be doubted, whether any part of scripture forbids (at least I know not any) those in any nation that are invested with supreme authority, to be arrayed in gold and costly apparel; or to adorn their immediate attendants, or magistrates, or officers, with the same. It is not improbable, that our blessed Lord intended to give countenance to this custom, when he said, without the least mark of censure, or disapprobation, "Behold, those that wear gorgeous [*splendid*] apparel, are in kings' courts," Luke vii, 25.

8. What is then the meaning of these scriptures? What is it which they forbid? They manifestly forbid ordinary Christians, those in the lower or middle ranks of life, to be adorned with gold, or pearls, or costly apparel. But why? What harm is there herein? This deserves our serious consideration. But it is highly expedient, or rather absolutely necessary, for all who would consider it to any purpose, as far as is possible to divest themselves of all prejudice, and to stand open to conviction: is it not necessary likewise, in the highest degree, that they should earnestly beseech the Father of lights, that, "by his holy inspiration they may think the things that are right, and, by his merciful guidance, perform the same?" Then they will not say, no, not in their

hearts, (as I fear too many have done,) what the famous Jew said to the Christian, "Thou shalt not persuade me though thou hast persuaded me."

9. The question is, What harm does it do, to adorn ourselves with gold, or pearls, or costly array; suppose you can afford it? That is, suppose it does not hurt or impoverish your family? The first harm it does is, it engenders pride; and where it is already, increases it. Whoever narrowly observes what passes in his own heart, will easily discern this. Nothing is more natural than to think ourselves better, because we are dressed in better clothes. And it is scarce possible for a man to wear costly apparel, without, in some measure, valuing himself upon it. One of the old heathens was so well apprized of this, that when he had a spite to a poor man, and had a mind to turn his head, he made him a present of a suit of fine clothes.

"Eutrapelus, cuicunque nocere volebat,
Vestimenta dabat pretiosa."

He could not then but imagine himself to be as much better, as he was finer than his neighbour. And how many thousands, not only lords and gentlemen, in England, but honest tradesmen, argue the same way? Inferring the superior value of their persons from the value of their clothes!

10. "But may not one man be as proud, though clad in sackcloth, as another is, though clad in cloth of gold?" As this argument meets us at every turn, and is supposed to be unanswerable, it will be worth while to answer it once for all, and to show the utter emptiness of it. "May not, then, one in sackcloth," you ask, "be as proud as he that is clad in cloth of gold?" I answer, certainly he may: I suppose no one doubts of it. And what inference can you draw from this? Take a parallel case. One man that drinks a cup of wholesome wine, may be as sick as another that drinks poison: but does this prove that the poison has no more tendency to hurt a man than the wine? Or does it excuse any man for taking what has a natural tendency to make him sick? Now to apply this: experience shows that fine clothes have a natural tendency to make a man sick of pride. Plain clothes have not. Although it is true, you may be sick of pride in these also, yet they have no natural tendency, either to cause or increase this sickness. Therefore, all that desire to be clothed with humility, abstain from that poison.

11. Secondly: the wearing gay or costly apparel, naturally tends to breed and to increase vanity. By vanity I here mean, the love and desire of being admired and praised. Every one of you that is fond of dress, has a witness of this in your own bosom. Whether you will confess it before man or not, you are convinced of this before God. You know in your hearts, it is with a view to be admired, that you thus adorn yourselves; and that you would not be at the pains, were none to see you but God and his holy angels. Now the more you indulge this foolish desire, the more it grows upon you. You have vanity enough by nature; but by thus indulging it, you increase it a hundred fold. Oh stop! Aim at pleasing God alone, and all these ornaments will drop off.

12. Thirdly: the wearing of gay and costly apparel, naturally tends to beget anger, and every turbulent and uneasy passion. And it is on this very account that the apostle places this "outward adorning" in

direct opposition to the "ornament of a meek and quiet spirit." How remarkably does he add, "which is in the sight of God of great price:"

"Than gold or pearls more precious far,
And brighter than the morning star."

None can easily conceive, unless himself were to make the sad experiment, the contrariety there is between the "outward adorning," and this inward "quietness of spirit." You never can thoroughly enjoy this, while you are fond of the other. It is only while you sit loose to that "outward adorning," that you can in "patience possess your soul." Then only when you have cast off your fondness for dress, will the peace of God reign in your hearts.

13. Fourthly: gay and costly apparel directly tends to create and inflame lust. I was in doubt whether to name this brutal appetite. Or, in order to spare delicate ears, to express it by some gentle circumlocution. (Like the dean, who, some years ago, told his audience at Whitehall, "If you do not repent you will go to a place, which I have too much manners to name before this good company.") But I think it best to speak out: since the more the word shocks your ears, the more it may arm your heart. The fact is plain and undeniable: it has this effect both on the wearer and the beholder. To the former, our elegant poet, Cowley, addresses those fine lines:—

"The adorning thee with so much art
Is but a barbarous skill;
Tis like the poisoning of a dart,
Too apt before to kill."

That is, (to express the matter in plain terms, without any colouring,) "you poison the beholder, with far more of this base appetite, than otherwise he would feel." Did you not *know*, this would be the natural consequence of your elegant adorning? To push the question home, did you not *desire*, did you not *design* it should? And yet all the time, how did you

"Set to public view,
A specious face of innocence and virtue?"

Meanwhile you do not yourself escape the snare which you spread for others. The dart recoils, and you are infected with the same poison with which you infected them. You kindle a flame, which, at the same time, consumes both yourself and your admirers. And it is well, if it does not plunge both you and them into the flames of hell.

14. Fifthly: the wearing costly array is directly opposite to the being adorned with good works. Nothing can be more evident than this: for the more you lay out on your own apparel, the less you have left to clothe the naked, to feed the hungry, to lodge the strangers, to relieve those that are sick and in prison, and to lessen the numberless afflictions to which we are exposed in this vale of tears. And here is no room for the evasion used before: "I may be as *humble* in cloth of gold, as in sackcloth." If you could be as humble, when you choose costly, as when you choose plain apparel; (which I flatly deny;) yet you could not be as beneficent,—as plenteous in good works. Every shilling which you save from your own apparel, you may expend in clothing the naked, and relieving the various necessities of the poor, whom ye "have always with you." Therefore every shilling which you needlessly spend on your apparel, is, in effect, stolen from God and the poor! And how many precious opportunities of doing good have you defrauded

yourself of! How often have you disabled yourself from doing good, by purchasing what you did not want! For what end did you buy these ornaments? To please God? No; but to please your own fancy, or to gain the admiration and applause of those that were no wiser than yourself. How much good might you have done with that money? And what an irreparable loss have you sustained by not doing it, if it be true that the day is at hand, when "every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour!"

15. I pray consider this well. Perhaps you have not seen it in this light before. When you are laying out that money in costly apparel which you could have otherwise spared for the poor, you thereby deprive them of what God, the proprietor of all, had lodged in your hands for their use. If so, what you put upon yourself, you are, in effect, tearing from the back of the naked; as the costly and delicate food which you eat, you are snatching from the mouth of the hungry. For mercy, for pity, for Christ's sake, for the honour of his gospel, stay your hand! Do not throw this money away. Do not lay out on nothing, yea, worse than nothing, what may clothe your poor, naked, shivering, fellow creature!

16. Many years ago, when I was at Oxford, in a cold winter's day, a young maid (one of those we kept at school) called upon me. I said, You seem half starved. Have you nothing to cover you but that thin linen gown? She said, "Sir, this is all I have!" I put my hand in my pocket; but found I had scarce any money left, having just paid away what I had. It immediately struck me, Will thy Master say, "Well done, good and faithful steward! Thou hast adorned thy walls with the money which might have screened this poor creature from the cold!" Oh justice! Oh mercy! Are not these pictures the blood of this poor maid! See thy expensive apparel in the same light: thy gown, hat, head dress! Every thing about thee, which cost more than Christian duty required thee to lay out, is the blood of the poor! Oh be wise for the time to come! Be more merciful! More faithful to God and man! More abundantly *adorned* (like men and women professing godliness) *with good works!*

17. It is true, great allowance is to be made for those who have never been warned of these things, and perhaps do not know that there is a word in the Bible which forbids costly apparel. But what is *that to you?* You have been warned over and over; yea, in the plainest manner possible. And what have you profited thereby? Do not you still dress like other people of the same fortune? Is not your dress as gay, as expensive as theirs, who never had any such warning? As expensive as it would have been, if you had never heard a word said about it? Oh how will you answer this, when you and I stand together at the judgment seat of Christ! Nay, have not many of you grown finer as fast as you have grown richer? As you increased in substance, have you not increased in dress? Witness the profusion of ribands, gauze, or linen about your heads? What have you profited then by bearing the reproach of Christ? by being called Methodists? Are you not as fashionably dressed as others of your rank that are no Methodists? Do you ask, "But may we not as well buy fashionable things as unfashionable?" I answer, Not if they give you a bold, immodest look, as those huge hats, bonnets, head dresses do. And not if they cost more. "But

I can *afford* it." Oh lay aside for ever that idle, nonsensical word! No Christian can *afford* to waste any part of the substance which God has entrusted him with. How long are you to stay here? May not you to morrow, perhaps to night, be summoned to arise and go hence, in order to give an account of this and all your talents to the Judge of quick and dead?

18 How then can it be, that after so many warnings, you persist in the same folly? Is it not hence? There are still among you, some that neither profit themselves by all they hear, nor are willing that others should: and these, if any of you are almost persuaded to dress as Christians, reason, and rally, and laugh you out of it. Oh ye pretty triflers, I entreat you not to do the devil's work any longer! Whatever ye do yourselves, do not harden the hearts of others! And you that are of a better mind, avoid these tempters with all possible care; and if you come where any of them are, either beg them to be silent on the head, or quit the room.

19. Sixthly: the putting on of costly apparel is directly opposite to what the apostle terms, "the hidden man of the heart:" that is, to the whole "image of God," wherein we were created, and which is stamped anew upon the heart of every Christian believer;—opposite to "the mind which was in Christ Jesus," and the whole nature of inward holiness. All the time you are studying this outward adorning, the whole inward work of the Spirit stands still: or rather goes back; though by very gentle, and almost imperceptible degrees. Instead of growing more heavenly minded, you are more and more earthly minded. If you once had fellowship with the Father and the Son, it now gradually declines; and you insensibly sink deeper and deeper into the spirit of the world,—into foolish and hurtful desires, and grovelling appetites All these evils, and a thousand more, spring from that one root, indulging yourself in costly apparel.

20. Why then does not every one that either loves or fears God, flee from it, as from the face of a serpent? Why are *you* still so conformable to the irrational, sinful customs of a frantic world? Why do you still despise the express commandment of God, uttered in the plainest terms? You see the light: why do not you follow the light of your own mind? Your conscience tells you the truth: why do you not obey the dictates of your own conscience?

21. You answer, "Why, universal custom is against me; and I know not how to stem the mighty torrent?" Not only the profane, but the religious world, run violently the other way. Look into, I do not say, the theatres, but the churches, nay, and the meetings of every denomination; (except a few old fashioned Quakers, or the people called Moravians;) look into the congregations, in London or elsewhere, of those that are styled gospel ministers; look into Northampton chapel: yea, into the Tabernacle, or the chapel in Tottenham Court Road; nay, look into the chapel in West street, or that in the City Road; look at the very people that sit under the pulpit, or by the side of it; and are not *those that can afford it,* (I can hardly refrain from doing them the honour of naming their names,) as fashionably adorned, as those of the same rank in other places?

22. This is a melancholy truth. I am ashamed of it: but I know not how to help it. I call heaven and earth to witness this day, that it

is not my fault! The trumpet has not "given an uncertain sound," for near fifty years last past. Oh God! thou knowest I have borne a clear and a faithful testimony. In print, in preaching, in meeting the society, I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. I am therefore clear of the blood of those that will not hear. It lies upon their own head.

23. I warn you once more, in the name, and in the presence of God, that the number of those that rebel against God, is no excuse for your rebellion. He hath expressly told us, "Thou shalt not follow the multitude to do evil." It was said of a great, good man, he

> "Feared not, had Heaven decreed it, to have stood
> Adverse against the world, and singly good."

Who of you desire to share in that glorious character? To stand adverse against a world? If millions condemn you, it will be enough that you are acquitted by God and your own conscience.

24. "Nay, I think," say some, "I could bear the contempt or reproach of all the world beside. I regard none but my own relations, those especially that are of my own household. My father, my mother, my brothers and sisters, (and perhaps one that is nearer than them all,) are teasing me continually." This is a trial indeed; such as very few can judge of, but those that bear it. "I have not strength to bear it." No, not of your own: certainly you have not. But there is strength laid up for you on "One that is mighty!" His grace is sufficient for you; and he now sees your case, and is just ready to give it you. Meantime, remember his awful declaration, touching them that regard man more than God: "He that loveth father or mother, brother or sister, husband or wife, more than me, is not worthy of me."

25. But are there not some among you that did once renounce this conformity to the world, and dress, in every point, neat and plain, suitable to your profession? Why then did you not persevere therein? Why did you turn back from the good way? Did you contract an acquaintance, perhaps a friendship, with some that were still fond of dress? It is no wonder then that you was, sooner or later, moved to "measure back your steps to earth again." No less was to be expected, than that one sin would lead you on to another. It was one sin to contract a friendship with any that knew not God: for "know ye not that friendship with the world is enmity with God?" And this led you back into another, into that conformity to the world, from which you had clean escaped. But what are you to do now? Why, if you are wise, escape for your life: no delay: look not behind you! Without loss of time, renounce the cause and the effect together! Now, to day, before the heart be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, cut off, at one stroke, that sinful friendship with the ungodly, and that sinful conformity to the world! Determine this day! Do not delay till to morrow, lest you delay for ever. For God's sake, for your own soul's sake, fix your resolution now!

26. I conjure you all who have any regard for *me*, show me before I go hence, that I have not laboured, even in this respect, in vain, for near half a century. Let me see, before I die, a Methodist congregation, full as plain dressed as a Quaker congregation. Only be more consistent with yourselves. Let your dress be *cheap* as well as plain. Otherwise you do but trifle with God and me, and your own souls.

I pray, let there be no costly silks among you, how grave soever they may be. Let there be no Quaker linen; proverbially so called, for their exquisite fineness: no Brussels lace, no elephantine hats or bonnets, those scandals of female modesty. Be all of a piece, dressed from head to foot, as persons *professing godliness:* professing to do every thing, small and great, with the single view of pleasing God.

27. Let not any of you who are rich in this world, endeavour to excuse yourselves from this by talking nonsense. It is stark staring nonsense, to say, "Oh I can *afford* this or that." If you have regard to common sense, let that silly word never come out of your mouth. No man living can *afford* to waste any part of what God has committed to his trust. None can *afford* to throw any part of that food and raiment into the sea, which was lodged with him, on purpose to feed the hungry, and clothe the naked. And it is far worse than simple waste, to spend any part of it in gay or costly apparel. For this is no less than to turn wholesome food into deadly poison. It is giving so much money to poison both yourself and others, as far as your example spreads, with pride, vanity, anger, lust, love of the world, and a thousand "foolish and hurtful desires," which tend to "pierce them through with many sorrows." And is there no harm in all this? Oh God, arise, and maintain thy own cause! Let not men or devils any longer put out our eyes, and lead us blindfold into the pit of destruction!

28. I beseech you, every man that is here present before God, every woman, young or old, married or single, yea, every child that knows good from evil, take this to yourself. Each of you for one, take the apostle's advice: at least, hinder not others from taking it. I beseech you, oh ye parents, do not hinder your children from following their own convictions, even though you might think they would *look prettier* if they were adorned with such gewgaws as other children wear! I beseech you, oh ye husbands, do not hinder your wives! You, oh ye wives, do not hinder your husbands, either by word or deed, from acting just as they are persuaded in their own minds! Above all, I conjure you, ye half Methodists, you that trim between us and the world, you that frequently, perhaps constantly, hear our preaching, but are in no farther connection with us; yea, and all you that were once in full connection with us, but are not so now; whatever ye do yourselves, do not say one word to hinder others from recovering and practising the advice which has been now given! Yet a little while and we shall not need these poor coverings; for this corruptible body shall put on incorruption. Yet a few days hence, and this mortal body shall put on immortality. In the mean time, let this be our only care, "to put off the old man;" our old nature;—"which is corrupt;" which is altogether evil;—and to "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." In particular, "put on as the elect of God, bowels of mercies, kindness, gentleness, long suffering." Yea, to sum up all in one word, "put on Christ;" that "when he shall appear, ye may appear with him in glory."

SERMON XCIV.—*The More Excellent Way.*

"Covet earnestly the best gifts; and yet I show unto you a more excellent way," 1 Cor. xii, 31.

1. IN the preceding verses, St. Paul has been speaking of the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost: such as healing the sick, prophesying, in the proper sense of the word; that is, foretelling things to come; speaking with strange tongues, such as the speaker had never learned; and the miraculous interpretation of tongues. And these gifts, the apostle allows to be desirable: yea, he exhorts the Corinthians, at least the teachers among them, (to whom chiefly, if not solely, they were wont to be given in the first ages of the church,) to *covet* them *earnestly*, that thereby they might be qualified to be more useful either to Christians or heathens. "And yet," says he, "I show unto you a more excellent way:" far more desirable than all these put together: inasmuch as it will infallibly lead you to happiness, both in this world and in the world to come: whereas you might have all those gifts, yea, in the highest degree, and yet be miserable both in time and eternity.

2. It does not appear, that these extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were common in the church for more than two or three centuries. We seldom hear of them after that fatal period, when the emperor Constantine called himself a Christian; and from a vain imagination of promoting the Christian cause thereby, heaped riches, and power, and honour, upon the Christians in general; but in particular, upon the Christian clergy. From this time they almost totally ceased: very few instances of the kind were found. The cause of this was not, (as has been vulgarly supposed,) "because there was no more occasion for them," because all the world was become Christians. This is a miserable mistake: not a twentieth part of it was then nominally Christians. The real cause was, "the love of many," almost of all Christians, so called, was "waxed cold." The Christians had no more of the Spirit of Christ, than the other heathens. The Son of man, when he came to examine his church, could hardly "find faith upon earth." This was the real cause, why the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were no longer to be found in the Christian church; because the Christians were turned heathens again, and had only a dead form left.

3. However, I would not, at present, speak of these, of the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, but of the ordinary: and these, likewise, we may "covet earnestly," in order to be more useful in our generation. With this view we may covet "the gift of *convincing speech*," in order to "sound the unbelieving heart;" and the gift of *persuasion*, to move the affections, as well as enlighten the understanding. We may covet *knowledge*, both of the word and of the works of God, whether of providence or grace. We may desire a measure of that *faith*, which, on particular occasions, wherein the glory of God or the happiness of men is nearly concerned, goes far beyond the power of natural causes. We may desire an easy elocution, a pleasing address, with resignation to the will of our Lord: yea, whatever would enable us, as we have opportunity, to be useful wherever we are. These gifts we may innocently desire: but there "is a more excellent way."

4. The way of love; of loving all men for God's sake; of humble, gentle, patient love,—is that which the apostle so admirably describes in the ensuing chapter. And without this he assures us, all eloquence, all knowledge, all faith, all works, and all sufferings, are of no more value in the sight of God, than sounding brass or a rumbling cymbal; and are not of the least avail towards our eternal salvation. Without this, all we know, all we believe, all we do, all we suffer, will profit us nothing in the great day of accounts.

5. But at present I would take a different view of the text, and point out a "more excellent way," in another sense. It is the observation of an ancient writer, that there have been from the beginning two orders of Christians. The one lived an innocent life, conforming in all things, not sinful, to the customs and fashions of the world; doing many good works, abstaining from gross evils, and attending the ordinances of God. They endeavoured, in general, to have a conscience void of offence in their behaviour, but did not aim at any particular strictness, being in most things like their neighbours. The other Christians not only abstained from all appearance of evil, were zealous of good works in every kind, and attended all the ordinances of God; but likewise used all diligence to attain the whole mind that was in Christ; and laboured to walk, in every point, as their beloved Master. In order to this, they walked in a constant course of universal self denial, trampling on every pleasure which they were not divinely conscious prepared them for taking pleasure in God. They took up their cross daily. They strove, they agonized without intermission, to enter in at the strait gate. This one thing they did, they spared no pains to arrive at the summit of Christian holiness; "leaving the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, to go on to perfection;" to "know all that love of God which passeth knowledge, and to be filled with all the fulness of God."

6. From long experience and observation I am inclined to think, that whoever finds redemption in the blood of Jesus, whoever is justified, has then the choice of walking in the higher or the lower path. I believe the Holy Spirit at that time sets before him the "more excellent way," and incites him to walk therein; to choose the narrowest path in the narrow way; to aspire after the heights and depths of holiness,—after the entire image of God. But if he does not accept this offer, he insensibly declines into the lower order of Christians. He still goes on in what may be called a good way, serving God in his degree, and finds mercy in the close of life, through the blood of the covenant.

7. I would be far from quenching the smoking flax; from discouraging those that serve God in a low degree. But I could not wish them to stop here: I would encourage them to come up higher, without thundering hell and damnation in their ears. Without condemning the way wherein they were, telling them it is the way that leads to destruction, I will endeavour to point out to them, what is, in every respect, "a more excellent way."

8. Let it be well remembered, I do not affirm, that all who do not walk in this way, are in the high road to hell. But this much I must affirm, they will not have so high a place in heaven, as they would have had, if they had chosen the better part. And will this be a small loss? The having so many fewer stars in your crown of glory. Will

it be a little thing to have a lower place than you might have had in the kingdom of your Father? Certainly there will be no sorrow in heaven; there all tears will be wiped from our eyes; but if it were possible grief could enter there, we should grieve at that irreparable loss. Irreparable then, but not now. Now, by the grace of God, we may choose the "more excellent way." Let us now compare this in a few particulars, with the way wherein most Christians walk.

I. 1. To begin at the beginning of the day. It is the manner of the generality of Christians, if they are not obliged to work for their living, to rise, particularly in winter, at eight or nine in the morning, after having lain in bed eight or nine, if not more hours. I do not say now, (as I should have been very apt to do fifty years ago,) that all who indulge themselves in this manner are in the way to hell. But neither can I say, they are in the way to heaven, denying themselves, and taking up their cross daily. Sure I am, there is "a more excellent way" to promote health both of body and mind. From an observation of more than sixty years, I have learned, that men in health require, at an average, from six to seven hours sleep; and healthy women a little more, from seven to eight, in four and twenty hours. I know this quantity of sleep to be most advantageous to the body as well as the soul. It is preferable to any medicine which I have known, both for preventing and removing nervous disorders. It is, therefore, undoubtedly, the most excellent way, in defiance of fashion and custom, to take just so much sleep, as experience proves our nature to require; seeing this is indisputably most conducive both to bodily and spiritual health. And why should you not walk in this way? Because it is difficult? Nay, with men it is impossible. But all things are possible with God; and by his grace, all things will be possible to *you*. Only continue instant in prayer, and you will find this, not only possible, but easy: yea, and it will be far easier, to rise early constantly, than to do it sometimes. But then you must begin at the right end; if you would rise early, you must sleep early. Impose it upon yourself, unless when something extraordinary occurs, to go to bed at a fixed hour. Then the difficulty of it will soon be over; but the advantage of it will remain for ever.

II. 1. The generality of Christians, as soon as they rise, are accustomed to use some kind of *prayer:* and probably to use the same form still, which they learned when they were eight or ten years old. Now I do not condemn those who proceed thus, (though many do,) as mocking God; though they have used the same form, without any variation, for twenty or thirty years together. But surely there is "a more excellent way" of ordering our private devotions. What if you were to follow the advice given by that great and good man, Mr. Law, on this subject? Consider both your outward and inward state, and vary your prayers accordingly. For instance: Suppose your outward state is prosperous; suppose you are in a state of health, ease, and plenty, having your lot cast among kind relations, good neighbours, and agreeable friends, that love you, and you them; then your outward state manifestly calls for praise and thanksgiving to God. On the other hand, if you are in a state of adversity; if God has laid trouble upon your loins; if you are in poverty, in want, in outward distress; if you are in imminent danger; if you are in pain and sickness; then

you are clearly called to pour out your soul before God, in such prayer as is suited to your circumstances. In like manner you may suit your devotions to your inward state, the present state of your mind. Is your soul in heaviness, either from a sense of sin, or through manifold temptations? Then let your prayer consist of such confessions, petitions, and supplications, as are agreeable to your distressed situation of mind. On the contrary, is your soul in peace? Are you rejoicing in God? Are his consolations not small with you? Then say with the psalmist, 'Thou art my God, and I will love thee: thou art my God, and I will praise thee." You may, likewise, when you have time, add to your other devotions, a little reading and meditation; and perhaps a psalm of praise: the natural effusion of a thankful heart. You must certainly see, that this is "a more excellent way," than the poor, dry form which you used before.

III. 1. The generality of Christians after using some prayer, usually apply themselves to the *business* of their calling. Every man that has any pretence to be a Christian, will not fail to do this: seeing it is impossible that an idle man can be a good man: sloth being inconsistent with religion. But with what view? For what end do you undertake and follow your worldly business? "To provide things necessary for myself and my family." It is a good answer, as far as it goes; but it does not go far enough. For a Turk or a heathen goes so far; does his work for the very same ends. But a Christian may go abundantly farther: his end in all his labour is, to please God; to do, not his own will, but the will of him that sent him into the world; for this very purpose, to do the will of God on earth, as angels do in heaven. He works for eternity. He "labours not for the meat that perisheth," (this is the smallest part of his motive,) "but for that which endureth to everlasting life." And is not this "a more excellent way?"

2. Again: in what *manner* do you transact your worldly business? I trust with diligence; whatever your hand findeth to do, doing it with your might: in justice, rendering to all their due, in every circumstance of life; yea, and in mercy, doing unto every man what you would he should do unto you. This is well: but a Christian is called to go still farther; to add piety to justice; to intermix prayer, especially the prayer of the heart, with all the labour of his hands. Without this, all his diligence and justice only show him to be an honest heathen; and many there are who profess the Christian religion, that go no farther than honest heathenism.

3. Yet again: in what *spirit* do you go through your business? In the spirit of the world, or in the spirit of Christ? I am afraid thousands of those who are called good Christians, do not understand the question. If you act in the spirit of Christ, you carry the end you at first proposed, through all your work from first to last. You do every thing in the spirit of sacrifice, giving up your will to the will of God; and continually aiming, not at ease, pleasure, or riches, not at any thing "this short-enduring world can give;" but merely at the glory of God. Now can any one deny, that this is the most excellent way of pursuing worldly business?

IV. 1. But these tenements of clay which we bear about us, require constant reparation, or they will sink into the earth from which they were taken, even sooner than nature requires. Daily food is neces-

sary to prevent this; to repair the decays of nature. It was common in the heathen world, when they were about to use this, to take meat or even drink, *libare pateram Jovi;* to pour out a little to the honour of their god: although the gods of the heathens were but devils, as the apostle justly observes. "It seems," (says a late writer,) "there was once some such custom as this in our own country. For we still frequently see a gentleman before he sits down to dinner in his own house, holding his hat before his face, and perhaps seeming to say something: though he generally does it in such a manner, that no one can tell what he says." Now what if, instead of this, every head of a family, before he sat down to eat and drink, either morning, noon, or night, (for the reason of the thing is the same at every hour of the day,) were seriously to ask a blessing from God, on what he was about to take? Yea, and afterwards, seriously to return thanks to the Giver of all his blessings? Would not this be "a more excellent way," than to use that dull farce, which is worse than nothing; being, in reality, no other than mockery both of God and man?

2. As to the *quantity* of their food, good sort of men do not usually eat to excess. At least not so far as to make themselves sick with meat, or to intoxicate themselves with drink. And as to the manner of taking it, it is usually innocent, mixed with a little mirth, which is said to help digestion. So far, so good. And provided they take only that measure of plain, cheap, wholesome food, which most promotes health both of body and mind, there will be no cause of blame. Neither can I require you to take that advice of Mr. Herbert, though he was a good man:

> "Take thy meat: think it dust: then eat a bit,
> And say with all, earth to earth I commit."

This is too melancholy: it does not suit with that cheerfulness, which is highly proper at a Christian meal. Permit me to illustrate this subject with a little story. The king of France one day pursuing the chase, outrode all his company, who, after seeking him some time, found him sitting in a cottage eating bread and cheese. Seeing them, he cried out, "Where have I lived all my time? I never before tasted so good food in my life!" "Sire," said one of them, "you never had so *good sauce* before; for you were never hungry." Now it is true, hunger is a good sauce; but there is one that is better still; that is, thankfulness. Sure, that is the most agreeable food, which is seasoned with this. And why should not yours at every meal? You need not then fix your eye on death: but receive every morsel as a pledge of life eternal. The author of your being gives you, in this food, not only a reprieve from death, but an earnest, that, in a little time, "death shall be swallowed up in victory."

3. The time of taking our food is usually a time of *conversation* also: as it is natural, to refresh our minds while we refresh our bodies. Let us consider a little, in what manner the generality of Christians usually converse together. What are the ordinary subjects of their conversation? If it is harmless, (as one would hope it is,) if there be nothing in it profane, nothing immodest, nothing untrue, or unkind: if there be no tale bearing, back biting, or evil speaking, they have reason to praise God for his restraining grace. But there is more than this implied, in "ordering our conversation aright." In order to this it is needful,

first, that "your communication," that is, discourse or conversation, 'be good;" that it be materially good; on good subjects; not fluttering about any thing that occurs: for what have you to do with courts and kings? It is not your business to

"Fight o'er the wars, reform the state;"

unless when some remarkable event calls for the acknowledgment of the justice or mercy of God You *must* indeed sometimes talk of worldly things, otherwise we may as well go out of the world. But it should be only so far as is needful: then we should return to a better subject. Secondly, Let your conversation be "to the use of edifying;" calculated to edify either the speaker or the hearers, or both: to build them up, as each has particular need, either in faith, or love, or holiness. Thirdly, see that it not only gives entertainment, but in one kind or other, "ministers grace to the hearers." Now is not this "a more excellent way" of conversing, than the harmless way above mentioned?

V. 1. We have seen what is the "more excellent way" of ordering our conversation, as well as our business. But we cannot be always intent upon business: both our bodies and minds require some relaxation. We need intervals of diversion from business. It will be necessary to be very explicit upon this head, as it is a point which has been much misunderstood.

2. Diversions are of various kinds. Some are almost peculiar to men, as the sports of the field: hunting, shooting, fishing, wherein not many women (I should say ladies) are concerned. Others are indifferently used by persons of both sexes: some of which are of a more public nature; as races, masquerades, plays, assemblies, balls. Others are chiefly used in private houses; as cards, dancing, and music; to which we may add, the reading of plays, novels, romances, newspapers, and fashionable poetry.

3. Some diversions, indeed, which were formerly in great request, are now fallen into disrepute. The nobility and gentry, in England at least, seem totally to disregard the once fashionable diversion of hawking: and the vulgar themselves are no longer diverted, by men hacking and hewing each other in pieces at broad sword. The noble game of quarter staff, likewise, is now exercised by very few. Yea, cudgelling has lost its honour, even in Wales itself. Bear baiting also is now very seldom seen, and bull baiting not very often. And it seems cock fighting would totally cease in England, were it not for two or three right honourable patrons.

4. It is not needful to say any thing more of these foul *remains of Gothic barbarity*, than that they are a reproach, not only to all religion, but even to human nature. One would not pass so severe a censure on the sports of the field. Let those who have nothing better to do, still run foxes and hares out of breath. Neither need much be said about horse races, till some man of sense will undertake to defend them. It seems a great deal more may be said in defence of seeing a serious tragedy. I could not do it with a clear conscience; at least not in an English theatre, the sink of all profaneness and debauchery; but possibly others can. I cannot say quite so much for balls or assemblies, which, though more reputable than masquerades, yet must be allowed by all impartial persons to have exactly the same tendency. So undoubtedly have all public dancings. And the same tendency they must have,

unless the same caution obtained among modern Christians which was observed among the ancient heathens. With them, men and women never danced together; but always in separate rooms. This was always observed in ancient Greece, and for several ages at Rome; where a woman dancing in company with men, would have at once been set down for a prostitute. Of playing at cards, I say the same as of seeing plays. I could not do it with a clear conscience. But I am not obliged to pass any sentence on those that are otherwise minded. I leave them to their own Master: to him let them stand or fall.

5. But supposing these, as well as the reading of plays, novels, news papers, and the like, to be quite innocent diversions, yet are there not more excellent ways of diverting themselves for those that love or fear God? Would men of fortune divert themselves in the open air? They may do it by cultivating and improving their lands, by planting their grounds, by laying out, carrying on, and perfecting their gardens and orchards. At other times they may visit and converse with the most serious and sensible of their neighbours: or they may visit the sick, the poor, the widows, and the fatherless in their affliction. Do they desire to divert themselves in the house? They may read useful history, pious and elegant poetry, or several branches of natural philosophy. If you have time, you may divert yourself by music, and perhaps by philosophical experiments. But above all, when you have once learned the use of prayer, you will find, that as

> "That which yields or fills
> All space, the ambient air, wide interfused
> Embraces round this florid earth:"

so will this; till through every space of life it be interfused with all your employments, and wherever you are, whatever you do, embrace you on every side. Then you will be able to say boldly;—

> "With me no melancholy void,
> No moment lingers unemploy'd
> Or unimproved below;
> My weariness of life is gone,
> Who live to serve my God alone,
> And only Jesus know."

VI. One point only remains to be considered; that is the use of money. What is the way wherein the generality of Christians employ this? And is there not "a more excellent way?"

1. The generality of Christians usually set apart something yearly, perhaps a tenth or even one eighth part of their income, whether it arise from yearly revenue, or from trade, for charitable uses. A few I have known, who said, like Zaccheus, "Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor." Oh that it would please God to multiply those friends of mankind, those general benefactors! but,

2. Besides those who have a stated rule, there are thousands who give large sums to the poor: especially when any striking instance of distress is represented to them in lively colours.

3. I praise God for all of you who act in this manner. May you never be weary of well doing! May God restore what you give, seven fold into your own bosom! But yet I show unto you "a more excellent way."

4. You may consider yourself as one, in whose hands the Proprietor of heaven and earth, and all things therein, has lodged a part of his goods, to be disposed of according to his direction. And his direction

is, that you should look upon yourself as one of a certain number of indigent persons, who are to be provided for out of that portion of his goods, wherewith you are entrusted. You have two advantages over the rest: the one, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive;" the other, that you are to serve yourself first; and others afterwards. This is the light wherein you are to see yourself and them. But to be more particular. First: If you have no family, after you have provided for yourself, give away all that remains; so that

> "Each Christmas your accounts may clear,
> And wind your bottom round the year."

This was the practice of all the young men at Oxford, who were called Methodists. For example: one of them had thirty pounds a year. He lived on twenty-eight, and gave away forty shillings. The next year receiving sixty pounds, he still lived on twenty-eight, and gave away two and thirty. The third year he received ninety pounds, and gave away sixty-two. The fourth year he received a hundred and twenty pounds. Still he lived as before on twenty-eight; and gave to the poor ninety-two. Was not this a more excellent way? Secondly: If you have a family, seriously consider before God how much each member of it wants, in order to have what is needful for life and godliness. And in general, do not allow them less, nor much more than you allow yourself. Thirdly: This being done, fix your purpose, to "gain no more." I charge you in the name of God, do not increase your substance! As it comes daily or yearly, so let it go: otherwise you "lay up treasures upon earth." And this our Lord as flatly forbids, as murder and adultery. By doing it, therefore, you would, "treasure up to yourselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

5. But suppose it were not forbidden, how can you, on principles of reason, spend your money in a way, which God may *possibly forgive*, instead of spending it in a manner which he will *certainly reward?* You will have no reward in heaven, for what you *lay up:* you will, for what you *lay out:* every pound you put into the earthly bank is sunk: it brings no interest above. But every pound you give to the poor, is put into the bank of heaven. And it will bring glorious interest: yea, and as such will be accumulating to all eternity.

6. Who then is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you? Let him resolve this day, this hour, this moment, the Lord assisting him, to choose in all the preceding particulars the "more excellent way:" and let him steadily keep it, both with regard to sleep, prayer, work, food, conversation, and diversions; and particularly, with regard to the employment of that important talent, money. Let *your* heart answer to the call of God, "From this moment, God being my helper, I will lay up no more treasure upon earth: this one thing I will do, I will lay up treasure in heaven: I will render unto God the things that are God's: I will give him all my goods, and all my heart!"

Sermon XCV.—*An Israelite Indeed.*

"Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile," John i, 47.

1. Some years ago, a very ingenious man, professor Hutcheson of Glasgow, published two treatises, on the original of our ideas of beauty and virtue. In the latter of these he maintains, that the very essence of virtue is, the love of our fellow creatures. He endeavours to prove, that virtue and benevolence are one and the same thing; that every temper is only so far virtuous, as it partakes of the nature of benevolence; and that all our words and actions are then only virtuous, when they spring from the same principle. "But does he not suppose gratitude, or the love of God, to be the foundation of this benevolence?" By no means: such a supposition as this never entered into his mind. Nay, he supposes just the contrary: he does not make the least scruple to aver, That if any temper or action be produced by any regard to God, or any view to a reward from him, it is not virtuous at all; and that if an action spring partly from benevolence, and partly from a view to God, the more there is in it of a view to God, the less there is of virtue.

2. I cannot see this beautiful essay of Mr. Hutcheson's in any other light, than as a decent, and, therefore, more dangerous attack upon the whole of the Christian revelation: seeing this asserts the love of God to be the true foundation, both of the love of our neighbour, and all other virtues: and accordingly, places this as "the first and great commandment," on which all the rest depend, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength." So that, according to the Bible, benevolence, or the love of our neighbour, is only the *second* commandment. And suppose the Scripture to be of God, it is so far from being true, that benevolence alone is both the foundation and the essence of all virtue, that benevolence itself is no virtue at all, unless it spring from the love of God.

3. Yet it cannot be denied, that this writer himself has a marginal note in favour of Christianity. "Who would not wish," says he, "that the Christian revelation could be proved to be of God? Seeing, it is, unquestionably, the most benevolent institution that ever appeared in the world." But is not this, if it be considered thoroughly, another blow at the very root of that revelation? Is it more or less than to say, "I wish it could; but, in truth, it cannot be proved?"

4. Another ingenious writer advances an hypothesis totally different from this. Mr. Wollaston, in the book which he entitles, "The Religion of Nature Delineated," endeavours to prove, that "truth is the essence of virtue;" or, conformableness to truth. But it seems, Mr. Wollaston goes farther from the Bible than Mr. Hutcheson himself. For Mr. Hutcheson's scheme sets aside only one of the two great commandments, namely, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God;" whereas, Mr. Wollaston sets aside both: for his hypothesis does not place the essence of virtue, in either the love of God or of our neighbour.

5. However both of these authors agree, though in different ways, to put asunder what God has joined. But St. Paul unites them together in teaching us to "speak the truth in love." And undoubtedly, both truth and love were united in him, to whom He who knows the hearts

of all men gives this amiable character, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile."

6. But who is it, concerning whom our blessed Lord gives this glorious testimony? Who is this Nathanael, of whom so remarkable an account is given in the latter part of the chapter before us? Is it not strange, that he is not mentioned again in any part of the New Testament? He is not mentioned again under this name; but probably he had another, whereby he was more commonly called. It was generally believed by the ancients, that he is the same person who is elsewhere termed Bartholomew: one of our Lord's apostles, and one that, in the enumeration of them, both by St. Matthew and St. Mark, is placed immediately after St. Philip, who first brought him to his Master. It is very probable, that his proper name was Nathanael; a name common among the Jews; and that his other name, Bartholomew, meaning only the son of Ptolemy, was derived from his father: a custom which was then exceeding common among the Jews, as well as the heathens.

7. By what little is said of him in the context, he appears to have been a man of an excellent spirit: not hasty of belief, and yet open to conviction, and willing to receive the truth, from whence soever it came. So we read, verse 45, "Philip findeth Nathanael," (probably, by what we term accident,) "and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth." "Nathanael saith unto him, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Has Moses spoke, or did the prophets write of any prophet to come from thence? "Philip saith unto him, Come and see;" and thou wilt soon be able to judge for thyself. Nathanael took his advice, without staying to confer with flesh and blood. "Jesus saw Nathanael coming, and saith, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" "Nathanael saith," doubtless with surprise enough, "Whence knowest thou me?" "Jesus saith, Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee." "Nathanael answered and said unto him," (so soon was all prejudice gone!) "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God! Thou art the King of Israel!"

But what is implied in our Lord's character of him? "In whom is no guile?" It may include all that is contained in that advice

> "Still let thy heart be true to God,
> Thy words to it, thy actions to them both."

I. 1. We may first observe, what is implied in having our hearts true to God? Does this imply any less than is included in that gracious command; "My son, give me thy heart?" Then only is our heart *true to God*, when we give it to him. We give him our heart in the lowest degree, when we seek our happiness in him: when we do not seek it in gratifying "the desire of the flesh;" in any of the pleasures of sense; —nor in gratifying "the desire of the eye;" in any of the pleasures of the imagination, arising from grand, or new, or beautiful objects, whether of nature or art;—neither in "the pride of life;" in "the honour that cometh of men;" in being beloved, esteemed, and applauded by them: no, nor yet in what some term, with equal impudence and ignorance, *the main chance;* the "laying up treasures on earth." When we seek happiness in none of these, but in God alone, then, we, in some sense, give him our heart.

2. But in a more proper sense, we give God our heart, when we not only seek, but find happiness in him. This happiness undoubtedly begins, when we begin to know him by the teaching of his own Spirit: when it pleases the Father to reveal his Son in our hearts, so that we can humbly say, "My Lord and my God;" and when the Son is pleased to reveal his Father in us, by "the Spirit of adoption crying in our hearts, Abba, Father," and bearing his "testimony to our spirits that we are the children of God." Then it is that "the love of God also is shed abroad in our hearts." And according to the degree of our love, is the degree of our happiness.

3. But it has been questioned, whether it is the design of God, that the happiness which is at first enjoyed by all that know and love him, should continue any longer than, as it were, the day of their espousals? In very many, we must allow, it does not: but in a few months, perhaps weeks, or even days, the joy and peace either vanishes at once, or gradually decays. Now, if God is willing that their happiness should continue, how is this to be accounted for?

4. I believe, very easily. St. Jude's exhortation, "Keep yourselves in the love of God," certainly implies, that something is to be done on our part, in order to its continuance. And is not this agreeable to that declaration of our Lord, concerning this and every gift of God; "Unto him that hath, shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but from him that hath not,"—that is, uses it not, improves it not,—"shall be taken away even that which he hath," Luke viii, 18.

5. Indeed, part of this verse is translated in our version, "That which he seemeth to have." But it is difficult to make sense of this. For if he only *seemeth* to have this, or any other gift of God, he really hath it not. And if so, it cannot be taken away: for no man can lose what he never had. It is plain, therefore, ο δοκει εχειν, ought to be rendered, *what he assuredly hath.* And it may be observed, that the word δοκεω, in various places of the New Testament, does not lessen, but strengthen the sense of the word joined with it. Accordingly, whoever improves the grace he has already received, whoever increases in the love of God, will surely retain it. God will continue, yea, will give it more abundantly: whereas, whoever does not improve this talent, cannot possibly retain it. Notwithstanding all he can do, it will infallibly be taken away from him.

II. 1. Meantime, as the heart of him that is "an Israelite indeed" is true to God, so his words are suitable thereto: and as there is no guile lodged in his heart, so there is none found in his lips. The first thing implied herein is, *veracity:* the speaking the truth from his heart: the putting away all wilful lying, in every kind and degree. A lie, according to a well known definition of it is, *falsum testimonium, cum intentione fallendi:* "a falsehood known to be such by the speaker, and uttered with an intention to deceive." But even the speaking of a falsehood is not a lie, if it be not spoken with an intent to deceive.

2. Most casuists, particularly those of the church of Rome, distinguish lies into three sorts: the first sort is malicious lies; the second, harmless lies; the third, officious lies: concerning which they pass a very different judgment. I know not any that are so hardy as even to excuse, much less defend *malicious* lies; that is, such as are told with a design to hurt any one: these are condemned by all parties. Men are

more divided in their judgment, with regard to *harmless* lies, such as are supposed to do neither good nor harm. The generality of men, even in the Christian world, utter them without any scruple, and openly maintain, that if they do no harm to any one else, they do none to the speaker. Whether they do or no, they have certainly no place in the mouth of him that is "an Israelite indeed." He cannot tell lies in jest, any more than in earnest. Nothing but truth is heard from his mouth. He remembers the express command of God to the Ephesian Christians: "Putting away all lying, speak every man truth to his neighbour," Eph. iv, 25.

3. Concerning *officious* lies, those that are spoken with a design to do good, there have been numerous controversies in the Christian church. Abundance of writers, and those men of renown for piety, as well as learning, have published whole volumes upon the subject, and in despite of all opposers, not only maintained them to be innocent, but commended them as meritorious. But what saith the Scripture? One passage is so express, that there does not need any other. It occurs in the third chapter of the epistle to the Romans, where the very words of the apostle are, verses 7, 8, "If the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory, why am I yet judged as a sinner?" (Will not that lie be excused from blame, for the good effect of it?) "And not rather, as we are slanderously reported, and as some affirm, that we say, let us do evil that good may come? Whose damnation is just." Here the apostle plainly declares, 1. That the good effect of a lie is no excuse for it: 2. That it is a mere slander upon Christians to say, "They teach men to do evil that good may come:" 3. That if any, in fact, do this; either teach men to do evil that good may come, or do so themselves; their damnation is just. This is peculiarly applicable to those who tell lies in order to do good thereby. It follows, that officious lies, as well as all others, are an abomination to the God of truth. Therefore, there is no absurdity, however strange it may sound, in that saying of the ancient father, "I would not tell a wilful lie, to save the souls of the whole world."

4. The second thing which is implied in the character of "an Israelite indeed," is *sincerity*. As veracity is opposite to lying, so sincerity is to cunning. But it is not opposite to wisdom, or discretion, which are well consistent with it. "But what is the difference between wisdom and cunning? Are they not almost, if not quite the same thing?" By no means. The difference between them is exceeding great. Wisdom is the faculty of discerning the best ends, and the fittest means of attaining them. The end of every rational creature is God: the enjoying him in time and in eternity. The best, indeed the only means of attaining this end, is, "the faith that worketh by love." True *prudence*, in the general sense of the word, is the same thing with wisdom. *Discretion* is but another name for prudence;—if it be not rather a part of it; as it is sometimes referred to our outward behaviour;—and means, the ordering our words and actions right. On the contrary, cunning (so it is usually termed among common men, but policy among the great) is in plain terms, neither better nor worse than the art of deceiving. If, therefore, it be any wisdom at all, it is "the wisdom from beneath;" springing from the bottomless pit, and leading down to the place from whence it came.

5. The two great means which cunning uses in order to deceive, are, *simulation*, and *dissimulation*. Simulation is, the seeming to be what we are not; dissimulation, the seeming not to be what we are; according to the old verse, *Quod non est, simulo: dissimuloque quod est.* Both the one and the other we commonly term, the hanging out of false colours. Innumerable are the shapes that simulation puts on in order to deceive. And almost as many are used by dissimulation for the same purpose. But the man of sincerity shuns them, and always appears exactly what he is.

6. "But suppose we are engaged with artful men, may we not use silence or reserve, especially if they ask insidious questions, without falling under the imputation of cunning?" Undoubtedly we may: nay, we ought on many occasions, either wholly to keep silence, or to speak with more or less reserve, as circumstances may require. To say nothing at all, is, in many cases, consistent with the highest sincerity. And so it is, to speak with reserve, to say only a part, perhaps a small part of what we know. But were we to pretend it to be the whole, this would be contrary to sincerity.

7. A more difficult question than this, is, "may we not speak the truth in order to deceive? Like him of old, who broke out into that exclamation, applauding his own ingenuity, *Hoc ego mihi puto palmarium, ut vera dicendo eos ambos fallam.* 'This I take to be my master piece, to deceive them both, by speaking the truth.'" I answer; a heathen might pique himself upon this; but a Christian could not. For although this is not contrary to veracity, yet it certainly is to sincerity. It is, therefore, the most excellent way, if we judge it proper to speak at all, to put away both simulation and dissimulation, and to speak the naked truth from our heart.

8. Perhaps this is properly termed, *simplicity*. It goes a little farther than sincerity itself. It implies not only, first, The speaking no known falsehood; and, secondly, The not designedly deceiving any one; but thirdly, The speaking plainly and artlessly to every one when we speak at all: the speaking as little children, in a childlike, though not a childish manner. Does not this utterly exclude the using any *compliments?* a vile word, the very sound of which I abhor: quite agreeing with our poet:—

> "It never was good day,
> Since lowly fawning was called compliment."

I advise men of sincerity and simplicity never to take that silly word into their mouths; but labour to keep at the utmost distance both from the name and the thing.

9. Not long before that remarkable time,

> "When statesmen sent a prelate cross the seas,
> By long famed act of pains and penalties,"

several bishops attacked bishop Atterbury at once, then bishop of Rochester, and asked; "My lord, why will you not suffer your servants to deny you, when you do not care to see company? It is not a lie for them to say, your lordship is not at home. For it deceives no one. Every one knows it means only, your lordship is busy." He replied, "My lords, if it is (which I doubt) consistent with sincerity, yet I am sure it is not consistent with that simplicity which becomes a Christian bishop."

10. But to return. The sincerity and simplicity of him in whom is no guile, have likewise an influence on his whole behaviour: they give a colour to his whole outward conversation; which, though it be far remote from every thing of clownishness and ill breeding, of roughness and surliness; yet is plain and artless, and free from all disguise; being the very picture of his heart. The truth and love which continually reign there, produce an open front, and a serene countenance; such as leave no pretence to say, with that arrogant king of Castile, "When God made man, he left one capital defect: he ought to have set a window in his breast;"—for he opens a window in his own breast, by the whole tenor of his words and actions.

11. This then is real, genuine, solid virtue. Not truth alone, nor conformity to truth. This is a property of real virtue; not the essence of it. Not love alone: though this comes nearer the mark: for *love*, in one sense, "is the fulfilling of the law" No: truth and love united together, are the essence of virtue or holiness. God indispensably requires "truth in the inward parts," influencing all our words and actions. Yet truth itself, separate from love, is nothing in his sight. But let the humble, gentle, patient love of all mankind, be fixed on its right foundation, namely, the love of God springing from faith, from a full conviction that God hath given his only Son to die for *my* sins; and then the whole will resolve into that grand conclusion, worthy of all men to be received: "Neither circumcision availeth any thing nor uncircumcision, but faith that worketh by love."

SERMON XCVI.—*On Charity.*

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

"And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

"And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing," 1 Cor. xiii, 1–3.

WE know, "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God," and is therefore true and right concerning all things. But we know, likewise, that there are some Scriptures which more immediately commend themselves to every man's conscience. In this rank we may place the passage before us: there are scarce any that object to it. On the contrary, the generality of men very readily appeal to it. Nothing is more common than to find even those who deny the authority of the Holy Scriptures, yet affirming, "this is my religion: that which is described in the thirteenth chapter of the Corinthians." Nay, even a Jew, Dr. Nunes, a Spanish physician, then settled at Savannah, in Georgia, used to say, with great earnestness, "That Paul of Tarsus was one of the finest writers I have ever read. I wish the thirteenth chapter of his first letter to the Corinthians were wrote in letters of gold. And I wish every Jew were to carry it with him wherever he went." He judged, (and herein he certainly judged right,) that this single chapter contained the whole of true religion. It contains "whatsoever things are

just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely: if there be any virtue, if there be any praise," it is all contained in this.

In order to see this in the clearest light, we may consider,

I. What the charity here spoken of is:

II. What those things are which are usually put in the place of it. We may then,

III. Observe, that neither of them, nor all of them put together, can supply the want of it.

I. 1. We are first, to consider, what this charity is? What is the nature, and what are the properties of it?

St. Paul's word is Αγαπη, exactly answering to the plain English word *love*. And accordingly it is so rendered in all the old translations of the Bible. So it stood in William Tindal's Bible, which I suppose was the first English translation of the whole Bible. So it was also in the Bible published by the authority of king Henry VIII. So it was likewise, in all the editions of the Bible that were successively published in England during the reign of king Edward VI., queen Elizabeth, and king James I. Nay, so it is found in the Bibles of king Charles the First's reign: I believe, to the period of it. The first Bibles I have seen, wherein the word was changed, were those printed by Roger Daniel and John Field, printers to the parliament, in the year 1649. Hence it seems probable that the alteration was made during the sitting of the long parliament: probably it was then that the Latin word charity was put in place of the English word *love*. It was in an unhappy hour this alteration was made: the ill effects of it remain to this day; and these may be observed, not only among the poor and illiterate;—not only thousands of common men and women, no more understand the word charity, than they do the original Greek;—but the same miserable mistake has diffused itself among men of education and learning. Thousands of these are misled thereby, and imagine that the charity treated of in this chapter refers chiefly, if not wholly, to outward actions, and to mean little more than almsgiving! I have heard many sermons preached upon this chapter: particularly before the University of Oxford. And I never heard more than one, wherein the meaning of it was not totally misrepresented. But had the old and proper word *love* been retained, there would have been no room for misrepresentation.

2 But what kind of love is that whereof the apostle is speaking throughout the chapter? Many persons of eminent learning and piety apprehend that it is the love of God. But from reading the whole chapter numberless times, and considering it in every light, I am thoroughly persuaded that what St. Paul is here directly speaking of is the love of our neighbour. I believe whoever carefully weighs the whole tenor of his discourse, will be fully convinced of this. But it must be allowed to be such a love of our neighbour, as can only spring from a love of God. And whence does this love of God flow? Only from that faith which is of the operation of God; which whoever has, has a direct evidence that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." When this is particularly applied to his heart, so that he can say, with humble boldness, "the life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me;" then, and not till then, "the love of God is shed abroad in his heart." And this love sweetly

constrains him to love every child of man with the love which is here spoken of; not with a love of esteem or of complacence; for this can have no place with regard to those who are (if not his personal enemies, yet) enemies to God and their own souls; but with a love of benevolence,—of tender good will to all the souls that God has made.

3. But it may be asked, "If there be no true love of our neighbour, but that which springs from the love of God; and if the love of God flows from no other fountain than faith in the Son of God; does it not follow, that the whole heathen world is excluded from all possibility of salvation? Seeing they are cut off from faith: for faith cometh by hearing; and how shall they hear without a preacher?" I answer, St. Paul's words, spoken on another occasion, are applicable to this; "What the law speaketh, it speaketh to them that are under the law." Accordingly, that sentence, "He that believeth not shall be damned," is spoken of them to whom the gospel is preached. Others it does not concern: and we are not required to determine any thing touching their final state. How it will please God, the Judge of all, to deal with *them*, we may leave to God himself. But this we know, that he is not the God of the Christians only, but the God of the heathens also; that he is "rich in mercy to all that call upon him," according to the light they have; and that "in every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him."

4. But to return. This is the nature of that love, whereof the apostle is here speaking. But what are the properties of it; the fruits which are inseparable from it? The apostle reckons up many of them; but the principal of them are these.

First, *Love is not puffed up.* As is the measure of love, so is the measure of humility. Nothing humbles the soul so deeply as love: it casts out all "high conceits, engendering pride;" all arrogance and overweening; makes us little, and poor, and base, and vile in our own eyes. It abases us both before God and man; makes us willing to be the least of all, and the servants of all, and teaches us to say, "A mote in the sun beam is little, but I am infinitely less in the presence of God."

5. Secondly, *Love is not provoked.* Our present English translation renders it, "it is not easily provoked." But how did the word *easily* come in? There is not a tittle of it in the text: the words of the apostle are simply these, ου παροξυνεται. Is it not probable, it was inserted by the translators, with a design to excuse St. Paul, for fear his practice should appear to contradict his doctrine? For we read, (Acts xv, 36, et seq.) "And some days after, Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city, where we have preached the word of the LORD, and see how they do. And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take with them one who departed from the work. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; and Paul chose Silas, and departed; being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches."

6. Would not any one think, on reading these words, that they were both equally sharp? That Paul was just as hot as Barnabas, and as

much wanting in love as he? But the text says no such thing; as will be plain, if we consider first the occasion. When St. Paul proposed, that they should "again visit the brethren in every city, where they had preached the word," so far they were agreed. "And Barnabas determined to take with them John," because he was his sister's son, without receiving or asking St. Paul's advice. "But Paul thought not good to take him with them who had departed from them from Pamphylia;' whether through sloth or cowardice; "and went not with them to the work." And undoubtedly he thought right: he had reason on his side. The following words are, εγενετο ουν παροξυσμος: literaliy, "And there was a fit of anger." It does not say in St. Paul: probably it was in Barnabas alone; who thus supplied the want of reason with passion: "so that they parted asunder." And Barnabas resolved to have his own way, did as his nephew had done before; "departed from the work,"—"took Mark with him, and sailed to Cyprus." But Paul went on in his work, "being recommended by the brethren to the grace of God:" which Barnabas seems not to have stayed for. "And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches." From the whole account, it does not appear that St. Paul was in any fault: that he either felt any temper, or spoke any word contrary to the law of love. Therefore, not being in any fault, he does not need any excuse.

7. Certainly he who is full of love is "gentle towards all men." He "in meekness instructs those that oppose themselves;" that oppose what he loves most, even the truth of God, or that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord: not knowing but "God, peradventure, may bring them to the knowledge of the truth." However provoked, he does "not return evil for evil, or railing for railing." Yea, he "blesses those that curse him, and does good to them that despitefully use him and persecute him." He "is not overcome of evil, but" always "overcomes evil with good."

8. Thirdly, *Love is long suffering*. It endures not a few affronts, reproaches, injuries; but *all things*, which God is pleased to permit either men or devils to inflict. It arms the soul with inviolable patience: not harsh, stoical patience, but yielding as the air, which, making no resistance to the stroke, receives no harm thereby. The lover of mankind remembers him who suffered for us, "leaving us an example that we might tread in his steps." Accordingly, "if his enemy hunger, he feeds him; if he thirst, he gives him drink:" and by so doing, he "heaps coals of fire," of melting love, upon his head. "And many waters cannot quench this love: neither can the floods" of ingratitude "drown it."

II. 1. We are, secondly, to inquire, What those things are, which it is commonly supposed, will supply the place of love? And the first of these is eloquence: a faculty of talking well, particularly on religious subjects. Men are generally inclined to think well of one that talks well. If he speaks properly and fluently of God, and the things of God, who can doubt of his being in God's favour? And it is very natural for him to think well of himself: to have as favourable an opinion of himself as others have.

2. But men of reflection are not satisfied with this: they are not content with a flood of words; they prefer thinking before talking;

and judge, one that knows much is far preferable to one that talks much. And it is certain, knowledge is an excellent gift of God; particularly knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, in which are contained all the depths of divine knowledge and wisdom. Hence it is generally thought that a man of much knowledge, knowledge of Scripture in particular, must not only be in the favour of God, but likewise enjoy a high degree of it.

3. But men of deeper reflection are apt to say, "I lay no stress upon any other knowledge, but the knowledge of God by faith. Faith is the only knowledge, which, in the sight of God, is of great price. 'We are saved by faith;' by faith alone: this is the one thing needful. He that believeth, and he alone, shall be saved everlastingly." There is much truth in this: it is unquestionably true, that "we are saved by faith:" consequently, that "he that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned."

4. But some men will say, with the apostle James, "Show me thy faith without thy works;" (if thou canst; but indeed it is impossible;) "and I will show thee my faith by my works." And many are induced to think that good works, works of piety and mercy, are of far more consequence than faith itself; and will supply the want of every other qualification for heaven. Indeed, this seems to be the general sentiment, not only of the members of the church of Rome, but of Protestants also; not of the giddy and thoughtless, but the serious members of our own church.

5. And this cannot be denied, our Lord himself hath said, "Ye shall know them by their fruits:" by their works ye know them that believe, and them that believe not. But yet it may be doubted, whether there is not a surer proof of the sincerity of our faith, than even our works: that is, our willingly suffering for righteousness' sake: especially if, after suffering reproach, and pain, and loss of friends and substance, a man gives up life itself; yea, by a shameful and painful death, by giving his body to be burned, rather than he would give up faith and a good conscience, by neglecting his known duty.

6. It is proper to observe here, first, What a beautiful gradation there is, each step rising above the other, in the enumeration of those several things, which some or other of those that are called Christians, and are usually accounted so, really believe will supply the absence of love. St. Paul begins at the lowest point, *talking well*, and advances step by step; every one rising higher than the preceding, till he comes to the highest of all. A step above eloquence is knowledge: faith is a step above this. Good works are a step above that faith: and even above this, is suffering for righteousness' sake. Nothing is higher than this, but Christian love: the love of our neighbour, flowing from the love of God.

7. It may be proper to observe, secondly, That whatever passes for religion in any part of the Christian world, (whether it be a part of religion, or no part at all, but either folly, superstition, or wickedness,) may with very little difficulty be reduced to one or other of these heads. Every thing which is supposed to be religion, either by Protestants or Romanists, and is not, is contained under one or another of these five particulars. Make trial, as often as you please, with any thing that is called religion, but improperly so called, and you will find the rule to hold without any exception.

III. 1. I am now, in the third place, to demonstrate, to all who have ears to hear, who do not harden themselves against conviction, that neither any one of these five qualifications, nor all of them together, will avail any thing before God, without the love above described.

In order to do this in the clearest manner, we may consider them one by one. And, first, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels;"—with an eloquence such as never was found in men, concerning the nature, attributes, and works of God, whether of creation or providence; though I were not herein a whit behind the chief of the apostles; preaching like St. Peter, and praying like St. John;—yet unless humble, gentle, patient love, be the ruling temper of my soul, I *am* no better in the judgment of God, "than sounding brass, or a rumbling cymbal." The highest eloquence, therefore, either in private conversation, or in public ministrations; the brightest talents either for preaching or prayer; if they were not joined with humble, meek, and patient resignation, might sink me the deeper into hell, but will not bring me one step nearer heaven.

2. A plain instance may illustrate this. I knew a young man between fifty and sixty years ago, who, during the course of several years, never endeavoured to convince any one of a religious truth, but he *was* convinced: and he never endeavoured to persuade any one to engage in a religious practice, but he was persuaded: what then? All that power of convincing speech, all that force of persuasion, if it was not joined with meekness and lowliness, with resignation and patient love, would no more qualify him for the fruition of God, than a clear voice, or a fine complexion. Nay, it would rather procure him a hotter place in everlasting burnings!

3. Secondly: "Though I have the gift of prophecy!"—of foretelling those future events which no creature can foresee, and "though I understand all [the] mysteries" of nature, of providence, and the word of God; and "have all knowledge" of things, divine or human, that any mortal ever attained to; though I can explain the most mysterious passages of Daniel, of Ezekiel, and the Revelation;—yet if I have not humility, gentleness, and resignation, "I am nothing" in the sight of God.

A little before the conclusion of the late war in Flanders, one who came from thence gave us a very strange relation. I knew not what judgment to form of this; but waited till John Haime should come over, of whose veracity I could no more doubt, than of his understanding. The account he gave was this:—"Jonathan Pyrah was a member of our society in Flanders. I knew him some years, and knew him to be a man of an unblamable character. One day he was summoned to appear before the board of general officers. One of them said, What is this which we hear of you? We hear you are turned prophet, and that you foretel the downfall of the bloody house of Bourbon, and the haughty house of Austria. We should be glad if you were a real prophet, and if your prophecies came true. But what sign do you give, to convince us you are so; and that your predictions will come to pass? He readily answered, 'Gentlemen, I give you a sign. To morrow at twelve o'clock, you shall have such a storm of thunder and lightning, as you never had before since you came into Flanders. I give you a second sign: as little as any of you expect any such thing, as little

appearance of it as there is now, you shall have a general engagement with the French within three days. I give you a third sign: I shall be ordered to advance in the first line. If I am a false prophet, I shall be shot dead at the first discharge. But if I am a true prophet, I shall only receive a musket ball in the calf of my left leg.' At twelve the next day there was such thunder and lightning as they never had before in Flanders. On the third day, contrary to all expectation, was the general battle of Fontenoy. He was ordered to advance in the first line. And at the very first discharge, he did receive a musket ball in the calf of his left leg."

4. And yet all this profited him nothing, either for temporal or eternal happiness. When the war was over, he returned to England; but the story was got before him: in consequence of which he was sent for by the countess of St——s, and several other persons of quality, who were desirous to receive so surprising an account from his own mouth. He could not bear so much honour. It quite turned his brain. In a little time he ran stark mad. And so he continues to this day, living still, as I apprehend, on Wibsey Mooreside, within a few miles of Leeds.*

5. And what would it profit a man to "have all knowledge," even that which is infinitely preferable to all other, the knowledge of the Holy Scripture? I knew a young man about twenty years ago, who was so thoroughly acquainted with the Bible, that if he was questioned concerning any Hebrew word in the Old, or any Greek word in the New Testament, he would tell, after a little pause, not only how often the one or the other occurred in the Bible, but also what it meant in every place. His name was Thomas Walsh.† Such a master of Biblic knowledge I never saw before, and never expect to see again. Yet if with all his knowledge he had been void of love; if he had been proud, passionate, or impatient: he and all his knowledge would have perished together, as sure as ever he was born.

6. "And though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains." —The faith which is able to do this, cannot be the fruit of vain imagination, a mere madman's dream, a system of opinions; but must be a real work of God: otherwise it could not have such an effect. Yet if this faith does not work by love, if it does not produce universal holiness, if it does not bring forth lowliness, meekness, and resignation, it will profit me nothing. This is as certain a truth as any that is delivered in the whole oracles of God. All faith that is, that ever was, or ever can be, separate from tender benevolence to every child of man, friend or foe, Christian, Jew, heretic, or pagan;—separate from gentleness to all men; separate from resignation in all events, and contentedness in all conditions;—is not the faith of a Christian, and will stand us in no stead before the face of God.

7. Hear ye this, all you that are called Methodists! You, of all men living are most concerned herein. You constantly speak of salvation by faith: and you are in the right for so doing. You maintain, (one and all,) that a man is justified by faith, without the works of the law. And you cannot do otherwise, without giving up the Bible, and betraying your own souls. You insist upon it, that we are saved by faith. and undoubtedly, so we are. But consider, meantime, that let us have

* At the time of writing this sermon. He is since dead

† His journal, written by himself, is extant.

ever so much faith, and be our faith ever so strong, it will never save us from hell, unless it now save us from all unholy tempers; from pride, passion, impatience; from all arrogance of spirit, all haughtiness and over bearing; from wrath, anger, bitterness; from discontent, murmuring, fretfulness, peevishness. We are of all men most inexcusable, if having been so frequently guarded against that strong delusion, we still, while we indulge any of these tempers, bless ourselves, and dream we are in the way to heaven!

8. Fourthly: "Although I give all my goods to the poor;"—though I divide all my real, and all my personal estate into small portions;—(so the original word properly signifies;) and diligently bestow it on those who, I have reason to believe, are the most proper objects;—yet if I am proud, passionate, or discontented; if I give way to any of these tempers; whatever good I may do to others, I do none to my own soul. Oh how pitiable a case is this! Who would not grieve, that these beneficent men should lose all their labour! It is true, many of them have a reward in this world, if not before, yet after their death. They have costly and pompous funerals. They have marble monuments of the most exquisite workmanship. They have epitaphs wrote in the most elegant strain, which extol their virtues to the skies. Perhaps they have yearly orations spoken over them, to transmit their memory to all generations. So have many founders of religious houses, of colleges alms houses, and most charitable institutions. And it is not an allowed rule, that none can exceed in the praise of the founder of his house, college, or hospital. But still what a poor reward is this! Will it add to their comfort or to their misery, suppose (which must be the case, if they did not die in faith) that they are in the hands of the devil and his angels! What insults, what cutting reproaches, would these occasion, from their infernal companions! Oh that they were wise! that all those who are zealous of good works, would put them in their proper place; would not imagine, they can supply the want of holy tempers; but take care that they may spring from them!

9. How exceeding strange must this sound in the ears of most of those who are, by the courtesy of England, called Christians! But stranger still is that assertion of the apostle, which comes in the last place: "Although I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing" Although rather than deny the faith, rather than commit a known sin, or omit a known duty, I voluntarily submit to a cruel death; "deliver up my body to be burned;" yet if I am under the power of pride, or anger, or fretfulnesss,—"it profiteth me nothing."

10. Perhaps this may be illustrated by an example. We have a remarkable account in the tracts of Dr. Geddes: (a civilian, who was envoy from queen Anne to the court of Portugal, in the latter end of her reign.) He was present at one of those *auto da fés*, (acts of faith,) wherein the Roman inquisitors burned heretics alive. One of the persons who was then brought out for execution, having been confined in the dungeons of the inquisition, had not seen the sun for many years. It proved a bright sun-shiny day. Looking up, he cried out in surprise, "Oh how can any one who sees that glorious luminary, worship any but the God that made it!" A friar standing by, ordered them to run an iron gag through his lips, that he might speak no more. Now what did that poor man feel within when this order was executed? If

he said in his heart, though he could not utter it with his lips, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;" undoubtedly the angels of God were ready to carry his soul into Abraham's bosom. But if, instead of this, he cherished the resentment in his heart, which he could not express with his tongue, although his body was consumed by the flames, I will not say his soul went to paradise.

11. The sum of all that has been observed is this: whatever I speak, whatever I know, whatever I believe, whatever I do, whatever I suffer; if I have not the faith that worketh by love; that produces love to God and all mankind; I am not in the narrow way which leadeth to life; but in the broad road that leadeth to destruction. In other words: whatever eloquence I have; whatever natural or supernatural knowledge; whatever faith I have received from God; whatever works I do, whether of piety or mercy; whatever sufferings I undergo for conscience' sake, even though I resist unto blood: all these things put together, however applauded of men, will avail nothing before God, unless I am meek and lowly in heart, and can say in all things, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt!"

12. We conclude from the whole, (and it can never be too much inculcated, because all the world votes on the other side,) that true religion, in the very essence of it, is nothing short of holy tempers. Consequently all other religion, whatever name it bears, whether Pagan, Mohammedan, Jewish, or Christian; and whether Popish or Protestant, Lutheran or Reformed; without these, is lighter than vanity itself.

13. Let every man, therefore, that has a soul to be saved, see that he secure this one point. With all his eloquence, his knowledge, his faith, works, and sufferings, let him hold fast this "one thing needful." He that through the power of faith, endureth to the end in humble, gentle, patient love; he, and he alone, shall, through the merits of Christ, "inherit the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world."

Sermon XCVII.—*On Zeal.*

"It is good to be always zealously affected in a good thing," Gal. iv, 18

1. There are few subjects in the whole compass of religion, that are of greater importance than this. For without zeal it is impossible, either to make any considerable progress in religion ourselves, or to do any considerable service to our neighbour, whether in temporal or spiritual things. And yet nothing has done more disservice to religion, or more mischief to mankind, than a sort of zeal, which has for several ages prevailed, both in Pagan, Mohammedan, and Christian nations. Insomuch that it may truly be said, pride, covetousness, ambition, revenge, have in all parts of the world slain their thousands; but zeal its ten thousands. Terrible instances of this have occurred in ancient times, in the most civilized heathen nations. To this chiefly were owing the inhuman persecutions of the primitive Christians; and, in later ages, the no less inhuman persecutions of the Protestants, by the church of Rome. It was zeal that kindled fires in our nation, during the reign

of bloody queen Mary. It was zeal that soon after made so many provinces of France a field of blood. It was zeal that murdered so many thousand unresisting Protestants, in the never to be forgotten massacre of Paris. It was zeal that occasioned the still more horrid massacre in Ireland; the like whereof, both with regard to the number of the murdered, and the shocking circumstances wherewith many of those murders were perpetrated, I verily believe never occurred before, since the world began. As to the other parts of Europe, an eminent German writer has taken immense pains, to search both the records, in various places, and the most authentic histories, in order to gain some competent knowledge of the blood which has been shed since the reformation And computes, that partly by private persecution, partly by religious wars in the course of forty years, reckoning from the year 1520, above forty millions of persons have been destroyed!

2. But is it not possible to distinguish right zeal from wrong? Undoubtedly it is possible. But it is difficult: such is the deceitfulness of the human heart. So skilfully do the passions justify themselves. And there are exceeding few treatises on the subject; at least in the English language. To this day I have seen or heard of only one sermon; and that was wrote above a hundred years ago, by Dr. Sprat, then bishop of Rochester, so that it is now exceeding scarce.

3. I would gladly cast in my mite, by God's assistance, towards the clearing up this important question, in order to enable well meaning men, who are desirous of pleasing God, to distinguish true Christian zeal from its various counterfeits. And this is more necessary at this time than it has been for many years. Sixty years ago there seemed to be scarce any such thing as religious zeal left in the nation. People in general were wonderfully cool and undisturbed about *that trifle, religion.* But since then, it is easy to observe, there has been a very considerable alteration. Many thousands, almost in every part of the nation, have felt a real desire to save their souls. And I am persuaded there is at this day more religious zeal in England, than there has been for a century past.

4. But has this zeal been of the right or the wrong kind? Probably both the one and the other. Let us see if we cannot separate these, that we may avoid the latter, and cleave to the former. In order to this I would first inquire,

I. What is the nature of true Christian zeal?

II. What are the properties of it? And,

III. Draw some practical inferences.

I. And, first, What is the nature of zeal in general, and of true Christian zeal in particular?

1. The original word, in its primary signification, means *heat;* such as the heat of boiling water. When it is figuratively applied to the mind, it means any warm emotion or affection. Sometimes it is taken for *envy.* So we render it, Acts v, 17, where we read, "The high priest, and all that were with him, were filled with envy:" επλησθησαν ζηλου: (although it might as well be rendered, *were filled with zeal.*) Sometimes, it is taken for anger and indignation; sometimes, for vehement desire. And when any of our passions are strongly moved on a religious account, whether for any thing good, or against any thing which we conceive to be evil, this we term, *religious zeal.*

2. But it is not all that is called religious zeal, which is worthy o. that name. It is not properly religious or Christian zeal, if it be not joined with charity. A fine writer, (bishop Sprat,) carries the matter farther still. "It has been affirmed," says that great man, "no zeal is right, which is not charitable, but is mostly so. Charity, or love, is not only one ingredient, but the chief ingredient in its composition." May we not go farther still? May we not say, that true zeal is not mostly charitable, but wholly so? That is, if we take charity in St. Paul's sense, for love; the love of God and our neighbour. For it is a certain truth, (although little understood in the world,) that Christian zeal is all love. It is nothing else. The love of God and man fills up its whole nature.

3. Yet it is not every degree of that love, to which this appellation is given. There may be some love, a small degree of it, where there is no zeal. But it is properly, love in a higher degree. It is *fervent love*. True Christian zeal is no other than the flame of love. This is the nature, the inmost essence of it.

II. 1. From hence it follows, that the properties of love, are the properties of zeal also. Now one of the chief properties of love, is humility: "love is not puffed up." Accordingly this is a property of true zeal: humility is inseparable from it. As is the degree of zeal, such is the degree of humility: they must rise and fall together. The same love which fills a man with zeal for God, makes him little, and poor, and vile in his own eyes.

2. Another of the properties of love is meekness: consequently it is one of the properties of zeal. It teaches us to be meek, as well as lowly: to be equally superior to anger or pride. Like as the wax melteth at the fire, so before this sacred flame, all turbulent passions melt away and leave the soul unruffled and serene.

3. Yet another property of love, and consequently of zeal, is unwearied patience: for "love endureth all things." It arms the soul with entire resignation to all the disposals of divine providence, and teaches us to say, in every occurrence, "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good." It enables us, in whatever station, therewith to be content: to repine at nothing; to murmur at nothing; "but in every thing to give thanks."

4. There is a fourth property of Christian zeal; which deserves to be more particularly considered. This we learn from the very words of the apostle, "It is good to be zealously affected" (not to have transient touches of zeal, but a steady rooted disposition) "in a good thing:" in that which is good: for the proper object of zeal, is good in general that is, every thing that is good, really such, in the sight of God.

5. But what is good in the sight of God? What is that religion, wherewith God is always well pleased? How do the parts of this rise one above another? And what is the comparative value of them?

This is a point exceeding little considered, and, therefore, little understood. Positive divinity, many have some knowledge of. But few know any thing of comparative divinity. I never saw but one tract wrote upon this head: a sketch of which it may be of use to subjoin.

In a Christian believer *love* sits upon the throne, which is erected in the inmost soul: namely, love of God and man, which fills the whole heart, and reigns without a rival. In a circle near the throne, are all holy tempers; long suffering, gentleness, meekness, fidelity

temperance: and if any other were comprised in "the mind which was in Christ Jesus." In an exterior circle are all the *works of mercy*, whether to the souls or bodies of men. By these we exercise all holy tempers; by these we continually improve them, so that all these are real means of grace, although this is not commonly adverted to. Next to these are those that are usually termed works of piety: reading and hearing the word, public, family, private prayer, receiving the Lord's supper, fasting or abstinence. Lastly, that his followers may the more effectually provoke one another to love, holy tempers, and good works, our blessed Lord has united them together in one body the church, dispersed all over the earth; a little emblem of which, of the church universal, we have in every particular Christian congregation.

6. This is that religion which our Lord has established upon earth, ever since the descent of the Holy Ghost, on the day of Pentecost. This is the entire, connected system of Christianity: and thus the several parts of it rise one above another, from that lowest point, the assembling ourselves together, to the highest, love enthroned in the heart. And hence it is easy to learn the comparative value of every branch of religion. Hence also we learn a fifth property of true zeal. That as it is always exercised, εν καλῳ, *that which is good*, so it is always *proportioned* to that good, to the degree of goodness that is in its object.

7. For example. Every Christian ought, undoubtedly, to be zealous for the church, bearing a strong affection to it, and earnestly desiring its prosperity and increase. He ought to be thus zealous, as for the church universal, praying for it continually, so especially for that particular church or Christian society, whereof he himself is a member. For this he ought to wrestle with God in prayer; meantime using every means in his power, to enlarge its borders, and to strengthen his brethren, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour.

8. But he should be more zealous for the ordinances of Christ, than for the church itself: for prayer in public and private; for the Lord's supper; for reading, hearing, and meditating on his word; and for the much neglected duty of fasting. These he should earnestly recommend; first, by his example; and then by advice, by argument, persuasion, and exhortation, as often as occasion offers.

9. Thus should he show his zeal for works of piety; but much more for works of mercy; seeing "God will have mercy and not sacrifice:" that is, rather than sacrifice. Whenever, therefore, one interferes with the other, works of mercy are to be preferred. Even reading, hearing, prayer, are to be omitted, or to be postponed, "at charity's almighty call," when we are called to relieve the distress of our neighbour, whether in body or soul.

10. But as zealous as we are for all good works, we should still be more zealous for holy tempers: for planting and promoting both in our souls, and in all we have any intercourse with, lowliness of mind, meekness, gentleness, long suffering, contentedness, resignation unto the will of God, deadness to the world and the things of the world, as the only means of being truly alive to God. For these proofs and fruits of living faith we cannot be too zealous. We should "talk of them as we sit in our house," and "when we walk by the way," and "when we lie down," and "when we rise up." We should make them

continual matter of prayer; as being far more excellent than any outward works whatever: seeing those will fail when the body drops off; but these will accompany us into eternity.

11. But our choicest zeal should be reserved for love itself, the end of the commandment, the fulfilling of the law. The church, the ordinances, outward works of every kind, yea, all other holy tempers, are inferior to this, and rise in value, only as they approach nearer and nearer to it. Here then is the great object of Christian zeal. Let every true believer in Christ, apply, with all fervency of spirit, to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that his heart may be more and more enlarged in love to God and to all mankind. This one thing let him do: let him "press on to this prize of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

III. It remains only to draw some practical inferences from the preceding observations.

1. And first, If zeal, true Christian zeal, be nothing but the flame of love, then *hatred*, in every kind and degree, then every sort of *bitterness* towards them that oppose us, is so far from deserving the name of zeal, that it is directly opposite to it. If zeal be only fervent love, then it stands at the utmost distance from *prejudice*, jealousy, evil surmising; seeing "love thinketh no evil." Then *bigotry* of every sort, and, above all, the spirit of *persecution*, are totally inconsistent with it. Let not, therefore, any of these unholy tempers screen themselves under that sacred name. As all these are the works of the devil, let them appear in their own shape, and no longer, under that specious disguise, deceive the unwary children of God.

2. Secondly: If lowliness be a property of zeal, then pride is inconsistent with it. It is true, some degree of pride may remain, after the love of God is shed abroad in the heart; as this is one of the last evils that is rooted out, when God creates all things new; but it cannot reign, nor retain any considerable power, where fervent love is found. Yea, were we to give way to it but a little, it would damp that holy fervour; and if we did not immediately fly back to Christ, would utterly quench the Spirit.

3. Thirdly: If meekness be an inseparable property of zeal, what shall we say of those who call their anger by that name? Why, that they mistake the truth totally; that they, in the fullest sense, put darkness for light, and light for darkness. We cannot be too watchful against this delusion, because it spreads over the whole Christian world. Almost in all places, zeal and anger pass for equivalent terms: and exceeding few persons are convinced, that there is any difference between them. How commonly do we hear it said, "See how zealous the man is!" Nay, he cannot be zealous: that is impossible; for he is in a passion: and passion is as inconsistent with zeal, as light with darkness, or heaven with hell!

It were well that this point were thoroughly understood. Let us consider it a little farther. We frequently observe one that bears the character of a religious man, vehemently angry at his neighbour. Perhaps he calls his brother, *Raca*, or *Thou fool:* he brings a railing accusation against him. You mildly admonish him of his warmth. He answers, "It is my zeal!" No: it is your sin; and unless you repent of it, will sink you lower than the grave. There is much such

zeal as this in the bottomless pit. Thence all zeal of this kind comes. And thither it will go, and you with it, unless you are saved from it, before you go hence!

4. Fourthly: If patience, contentedness, and resignation, are the properties of zeal, then murmuring fretfulness, discontent, impatience, are wholly inconsistent with it. And yet how ignorant are mankind of this! How often do we see men fretting at the ungodly, or telling you, they are *out of patience* with such or such things, and terming all this their zeal! Oh spare no pains to undeceive them! If it be possible, show them what zeal is: and convince them that all murmuring, or fretting at sin, is a species of sin, and has no resemblance of, or connection with, the true zeal of the gospel.

5. Fifthly: If the object of zeal be that which is good, then fervour for any *evil thing* is not Christian zeal. I instance in *idolatry*, worshipping of angels, saints, images, the cross. Although, therefore, a man were so earnestly attached to any kind of idolatrous worship, that he would even "give his body to be burned," rather than refrain from it, call this bigotry or superstition, if you please, but call it not zeal; that is quite another thing.

From the same premises it follows, that fervour for *indifferent things*, is not Christian zeal. But how exceedingly common is this mistake too! Indeed one would think, that men of understanding could not be capable of such weakness. But alas! the history of all ages proves the contrary. Who were men of stronger understandings than bishop Ridley and bishop Hooper? And how warmly did these, and other great men of that age, dispute about the *sacerdotal vestments!* How eager was the contention for almost a hundred years, for and against wearing a *surplice!* Oh shame to man! I would as soon have disputed about a straw, or a barley corn! And this, indeed, shall be called zeal! And why was it not rather called wisdom, or holiness?

6. It follows also, from the same premises, that fervour for *opinions* is not Christian zeal. But how few are sensible of this! And how innumerable are the mischiefs, which even this species of false zeal has occasioned in the Christian world! How many thousand lives have been cast away by those who were zealous for the Romish opinions! How many of the excellent ones of the earth have been cut off by zealots, for the senseless opinion of transubstantiation! But does not every unprejudiced person see, that this zeal is "earthly, sensual, devilish?" And that it stands at the utmost contrariety to that zeal, which is here recommended by the apostle?

What an excess of charity is it then which our great poet expresses, in his poem on the Last Day; where he talks of meeting in heaven,

> "Those who by mutual wounds expired,
> By *zeal* for their distinct persuasions fired."

Zeal indeed! What manner of zeal was this, which led them to cut one another's throats? Those who were *fired* with this spirit, and died therein, will undoubtedly, have their portion not in heaven, (only love is there,) but in the "fire that never shall be quenched."

7. Lastly: If true zeal be always proportioned to the degree of goodness which is in its object, then should it rise higher and higher according to the scale mentioned above; according to the comparative value of the several parts of religion. For instance, all that truly fear

God should be zealous for the *church;* both for the catholic or universal church, and for that part of it whereof they are members. This is not the appointment of men but of God. He saw, it was "not good for man to be alone," even in this sense, but that the whole body of his children should be "knit together, and strengthened, by that which every joint supplieth." At the same time they should be more zealous for the *ordinances* of God; for public and private prayer, for hearing and reading the word of God, and for fasting, and the Lord's supper. But they should be more zealous for *works of mercy*, than even for works of piety. Yet ought they to be more zealous still, for all *holy tempers*, lowliness, meekness, resignation: but most zealous of all, for that which is the sum and the perfection of religion, the *love* of God and man.

8. It remains only to make a close and honest application of these things to our own souls. We all know the general truth, that "it is good to be always zealously affected in a good thing." Let us now, every one of us, apply it to his own soul in particular.

9. Those indeed who are still dead in trespasses and sins, have neither part nor lot in this matter: nor those that live in any open sin, such as drunkenness, sabbath breaking, or profane swearing. These have nothing to do with zeal: they have no business at all even to take the word in their mouth. It is utter folly and impertinence for any to talk of zeal for God, while he is doing the works of the devil. But if you have renounced the devil and all his works, and have settled it in your heart, I will "worship the Lord my God, and him only will I serve," then beware of being neither cold nor hot: then be zealous for God. You may begin at the lowest step. Be zealous for *the church;* more especially, for that particular branch thereof, wherein your lot is cast. Study the welfare of this, and carefully observe all the rules of it, for conscience' sake. But, in the mean time, take heed that you do not neglect any of the *ordinances* of God; for the sake of which, in a great measure, the church itself was constituted: so that it would be highly absurd, to talk of zeal for the church, if you were not more zealous for them. But are you more zealous for *works of mercy*, than even for works of piety? Do *you* follow the example of your Lord, and prefer mercy even before sacrifice? Do you use all diligence in feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting them that are sick and in prison? And, above all, do you use every means in your power to save souls from death? If, as you have time, "you do good unto all men," though "especially to them that are of the household of faith," your zeal for the church is pleasing to God: but if not, if you are not "careful to maintain good works," what have you to do with the church? If you have not "compassion on your fellow servants," neither will your Lord have pity on *you*. "Bring no more vain oblations." All your service is "an abomination to the Lord."

10. Are you better instructed than to put asunder what God has joined? Than to separate works of piety from works of mercy? Are you uniformly zealous of both? So far you walk acceptably to God. that is, if you continually bear in mind, that God "searcheth the heart and reins;" that "he is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth;" that consequently no outward works are acceptable to him, unless they spring from *holy tempers*, without which no man can have a place in the kingdom or Christ and God.

11. But of all holy tempers, and above all others, see that you be most zealous for *love*. Count all things loss in comparison of this, the love of God and all mankind. It is most sure, that if you give all your goods to feed the poor, yea, and your body to be burned, and have not humble, gentle, patient love, it profiteth you nothing. Oh let this be deep engraven upon your heart: all is nothing without love!

12. Take then, the whole of religion together, just as God has revealed it in his word, and be uniformly zealous for every part of it, according to its degree of excellence, grounding all your zeal on the one foundation, "Jesus Christ and him crucified:" holding fast this one principle, "The life I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved ME, and gave himself for ME." Proportion your zeal to the value of its object. Be calmly zealous, therefore, first, for the *church*; "the whole state of Christ's church militant here on earth;" and in particular for that branch thereof, with which you are more immediately connected. Be more zealous for all those *ordinances* which our blessed Lord hath appointed, to continue therein to the end of the world. Be more zealous for those *works of mercy*, those "sacrifices wherewith God is well pleased," those marks whereby the Shepherd of Israel will know his sheep at the last day. Be more zealous still for *holy tempers*, for long suffering, gentleness, meekness, lowliness, and resignation: but be most zealous of all for *love*, the queen of all graces, the highest perfection in earth or heaven, the very image of the invisible God, as in men below, so in angels above. For "GOD is love: and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him."

SERMON XCVIII.—*On Redeeming the Time.*

"Redeeming the time," Ephes. v, 16.

1. "SEE that ye walk circumspectly," says the apostle in the preceding verse, "not as fools, but as wise men, redeeming the time;" saving all the time you can for the best purposes: buying up every fleeting moment out of the hands of sin and Satan, out of the hands of sloth, ease, pleasure, worldly business; the more diligently, because the present "are evil days," days of the grossest ignorance, immorality, and profaneness.

2. This seems to be the general meaning of the words. But I purpose, at present, to consider only one particular way of "redeeming the time," namely, from sleep.

3. This appears to have been exceeding little considered even by pious men. Many that have been eminently conscientious in other respects, have not been so in this. They seemed to think it an indifferent thing, whether they slept more or less, and never saw it in the true point of view, as an important branch of Christian temperance.

That we may have a more just conception hereof, I will endeavour to show,

I. What it is to redeem the time from sleep.

II. The evil of not redeeming it. And,

III. The most effectual manner of doing it.

I. 1. And, first, What is it to redeem the time from sleep? It is, in general, to take that measure of sleep every night which nature requires, and no more: that measure which is most conducive to the health and vigour both of the body and mind.

2. But it is objected, "one measure will not suit all men: some require considerably more than others. Neither will the same measure suffice even the same persons, at one time as at another. When a person is sick, or if not actually so, yet weakened by preceding sickness, he certainly wants more of this natural restorative, than he did when in perfect health. And so he will, when his strength and spirits are exhausted by hard or long continued labour."

3. All this is unquestionably true, and confirmed by a thousand experiments. Whoever, therefore, they are that have attempted to fix one measure of sleep for all persons, did not understand the nature of the human body, so widely different in different persons: as neither did they, who imagined that the same measure would suit even the same person at all times. One would wonder, therefore, that so great a man as bishop Taylor, should have formed this strange imagination: much more that the measure which he has assigned for the general standard, should be only three hours in four and twenty. That good and sensible man, Mr. Baxter, was not much nearer the truth: who supposes four hours in four and twenty will suffice for any man. I know an extremely sensible man, who was absolutely persuaded, that no one living needed to sleep above five hours in twenty-four. But when he made the experiment himself, he quickly relinquished the opinion. And I am fully convinced, by an observation continued for more than fifty years, that whatever may be done by extraordinary persons, or in some extraordinary cases, (wherein persons have subsisted with very little sleep for some weeks, or even months,) a human body can scarce continue in health and vigour, without, at least, six hours sleep in four and twenty. Sure I am, I never met with such an instance: I never found either man or woman that retained vigorous health for one year, with a less quantity of sleep than this.

4. And I have long observed, that women, in general, want a little more sleep than men: perhaps, because they are in common, of a weaker, as well as a moister habit of body. If, therefore, one might venture to name one standard, (though liable to many exceptions and occasional alterations,) I am inclined to think, this would come near to the mark: healthy men, in general, need a little above six hours' sleep: healthy women, a little above seven in four and twenty. I myself want six hours and a half, and I cannot well subsist with less.

5. If any one desire to know exactly what quantity of sleep his own constitution requires, he may very easily make the experiment which I made about sixty years ago: I then waked every night about twelve or one, and lay awake for some time. I readily concluded, that this arose from my lying longer in bed than nature required. To be satisfied, I procured an alarum, which waked me the next morning at seven: (near an hour earlier than I rose the day before:) yet I lay awake again at night. The second morning I rose at six: but notwithstanding this, I lay awake the second night. The third morning, I rose at five: but nevertheless I lay awake the third night. The fourth morning I rose at four: (as, by the grace of God, I have done ever since:) and I lay

awake no more. And I do not now lie awake (taking the year round) a quarter of an hour together in a month. By the same experiment, rising earlier and earlier every morning, may any one find, how much sleep he really wants.

II. 1. "But why should any one be at so much pains? What need is there of being so scrupulous? Why should we make ourselves so particular? What harm is there in doing as our neighbours do? Suppose in lying from ten till six or seven in summer, and till eight or nine in winter?"

2. If you would consider this question fairly, you will need a good deal of candour and impartiality; as what I am about to say will probably be quite new; different from any thing you ever heard in your life; different from the judgment, at least, from the example of your parents and your nearest relations: nay, and perhaps of the most religious persons you ever were acquainted with. Lift up, therefore, your heart to the Spirit of Truth, and beg of him to shine upon it, that without respecting any man's person, you may see and follow the truth as it is in Jesus.

3. Do you really desire to know, what harm there is, in not redeeming all the time you can from sleep? Suppose in spending therein an hour a day more than nature requires? Why, first, *it hurts your substance;* it is throwing away six hours a week, which might turn to some temporal account. If you can do any work, you might earn something in that time, were it ever so small. And you have no need to throw even this away. If you do not want it yourself, give it to them that do: you know some of them that are not far off. If you are of no trade, still you may so employ the time, that it will bring money, or money's worth, to yourself, or others.

4. The not redeeming all the time you can from sleep, the spending more time therein than your constitution necessarily requires, in the second place, *hurts your health.* Nothing can be more certain than this, though it is not commonly observed, because the evil steals on you by slow and insensible degrees. In this gradual and almost imperceptible manner, it lays the foundation of many diseases. It is the chief, real (though unsuspected) cause of all nervous diseases in particular. Many inquiries have been made, why nervous disorders are so much more common among us, than among our ancestors? Other causes may frequently concur; but the chief is, we lie longer in bed. Instead of rising at four, most of us, who are not obliged to work for our bread, lie till seven, eight, or nine. We need inquire no farther. This sufficiently accounts for the large increase of these painful disorders.

5. It may be observed that most of these arise, not barely from sleeping too long, but even from what we imagine to be quite harmless, the lying too long in bed. By *soaking* (as it is emphatically called) so long between warm sheets, the flesh is, as it were, parboiled, and becomes soft and flabby. The nerves, in the mean time, are quite unstrung, and all the train of melancholy symptoms, faintness, tremours, lowness of spirits, (so called,) come on, till life itself is a burden.

6. One common effect of either sleeping too long, or lying too long in bed, is *weakness of sight*, particularly that weakness which is of the nervous kind. When I was young, my sight was remarkably weak. Why is it stronger now than it was forty years ago? I impute this prin-

cipally to the blessing of God, who fits us for whatever he calls us to. But undoubtedly the outward means which he has been pleased to bless, was the rising early in the morning.

7. A still greater objection to the not rising early, the not redeeming all the time we can from sleep, is, *it hurts the soul*, as well as the body: it is a sin against God. And this indeed it must necessarily be, on both the preceding accounts. For we cannot waste, or (which comes to the same thing) not improve, any part of our worldly substance, neither can we impair our own health, without sinning against him.

8. But this fashionable intemperance does also hurt the soul in a more direct manner. It sows the seeds of foolish and hurtful desires; it dangerously inflames our natural appetites; which a person stretching and yawning in bed, is just prepared to gratify. It breeds and continually increases sloth, so often objected to the English nation. It opens the way, and prepares the soul for every other kind of intemperance. It breeds a universal softness and faintness of spirit, making us afraid of every little inconvenience, unwilling to deny ourselves any pleasure, or to take up or bear any cross. And how then shall we be able (without which we must drop into hell) to "take the kingdom of heaven by violence?" It totally unfits us for "enduring hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ;" and consequently for "fighting the good fight of faith, and laying hold on eternal life."

9. In how beautiful a manner does that great man, Mr. Law, treat this important subject!* Part of his words I cannot but here subjoin, for the use of every sensible reader.

"I take it for granted, that every Christian who is in health is up early in the morning. For it is much more reasonable to suppose a person is up early, because he is a Christian, than because he is a labourer, or a tradesman, or a servant.

"We conceive an abhorrence of a man that is in bed, when he should be at his labour. We cannot think good of him, who is such a slave to drowsiness to neglect his business for it.

"Let this, therefore, teach us to conceive, how odious we must appear to God, if we are in bed, shut up in sleep, when we should be praising God; and are such slaves to drowsiness, as to neglect our devotions for it.

"Sleep is such a dull, stupid state of existence, that even among mere animals, we despise them most which are most drowsy. He, therefore, that chooses to enlarge the slothful indolence of sleep, rather than be early at his devotions; chooses the dullest refreshments of the body before the noblest enjoyments of the soul. He chooses that state which is a reproach to mere animals, before that exercise which is the glory of angels."

10. Besides, he that cannot deny himself this drowsy indulgence, is no more prepared for prayer when he is up, than he is prepared for fasting or any other act of self denial. He may indeed more easily read over a form of prayer, than he can perform these duties: but he is no more disposed for the spirit of prayer, than he is disposed for fasting. For sleep thus indulged gives a softness to all our tempers, and makes us unable to relish any thing but what suits an idle state of mind, as sleep does. So that a person, who is a slave to this idleness, is in the same temper when he is up. Every thing that is idle or sensual,

* Viz. redeeming time from sleep.

pleases him. And every thing that requires trouble or self denial, is hateful to him, for the same reason that he hates to rise.

11. It is not possible for an epicure to be truly devout. He must renounce his sensuality, before he can relish the happiness of devotion. Now he that turns sleep into an idle indulgence, does as much to corrupt his soul, to make it a slave to bodily appetites, as an epicure does. It does not disorder his health, as notorious acts of intemperance do; but like any more moderate course of indulgence, it silently, and by smaller degrees, wears away the spirit of religion, and sinks the soul into dulness and sensuality.

Self denial of all kinds is the very life and soul of piety. But he that has not so much of it as to be able to be early at his prayers, cannot think that he has taken up his cross, and is following Christ.

What conquest has he got over himself? What right hand has he cut off? What trials is he prepared for? What sacrifice is he ready to offer to God, who cannot be so cruel to himself as to rise to prayer at such a time, as the drudging part of the world are content to rise to their labour?

12. Some people will not scruple to tell you, that they indulge themselves in sleep, because they have nothing to do: and that if they had any business to rise to, they would not lose so much of their time in sleep. But they must be told that they mistake the matter: that they have a great deal of business to do: they have a hardened heart to change; they have the whole spirit of religion to get. For surely he that thinks he has nothing to do, because nothing but his prayers want him, may justly be said to have the whole spirit of religion to seek.

You must not, therefore, consider how small a fault it is to rise late, but how great a misery it is to want the spirit of religion: and to live in such softness and idleness as make you incapable of the fundamental duties of Christianity.

If I was to desire you not to study the gratification of your palate, I would not insist upon the sin of wasting your money, though it is a great one; but I would desire you to renounce such a way of life, because it supports you in such a state of sensuality, as renders you incapable of relishing the most essential doctrines of religion.

For the same reason, I do not insist much upon the sin of wasting your time in sleep, though it be a great one; but I desire you to renounce this indulgence, because it gives a softness and idleness to your soul, and is so contrary to that lively, zealous, watchful, self denying spirit, which was not only the spirit of Christ and his apostles, and the spirit of all the saints and martyrs that have ever been among men, but must be the spirit of all those who would not sink in the common corruption of the world.

13. Here, therefore, we must fix our charge against this practice. We must blame it, not as having this or that particular evil, but as a general habit that extends itself through our whole spirit, and supports a state of mind that is wholly wrong.

It is contrary to piety; not as accidental slips or mistakes in life are contrary to it; but in such a manner as an ill state of body is contrary to health.

"On the other hand, if you was to rise early every morning, as an instance of self denial, as a method of renouncing indulgence, as a means of redeeming your time and fitting your spirit for prayer, you would soon

find the advantage. This method, though it seems but a small circumstance, might be a means of great piety. It would constantly keep it in your mind, that softness and idleness are the bane of religion. It would teach you to exercise power over yourself, and to renounce other pleasures and tempers that war against the soul. And what is so planted and watered, will certainly have an increase from God."

III. 1. It now only remains to inquire, in the third place, How we may redeem the time? How we may proceed in this important affair? In what manner shall we most effectually practise this important branch of temperance?

I advise all of you who are thoroughly convinced of the unspeakable importance of it, suffer not that conviction to die away, but instantly begin to act suitably to it. Only do not depend on your own strength: if you do, you will be utterly baffled. Be deeply sensible, that as you are not able to do any thing good of yourselves, so here in particular, all your strength, all your resolution, will avail nothing. Whoever trusts in himself will be confounded. I never found an exception. I never knew one who trusted in his own strength that could keep this resolution for a twelve month.

2. I advise you, secondly, cry to the strong for strength. Call upon him that hath all power in heaven and earth: and believe that he will answer the prayer that goeth not out of feigned lips. As you cannot have too little confidence in yourself, so you cannot have too much in him. Then set out in faith: and surely his strength shall be made perfect in your weakness.

3. I advise you, thirdly, Add to your faith, prudence: use the most rational means to attain your purpose. Particularly begin at the right end, otherwise you will lose your labour. If you desire to rise early, sleep early: secure this point at all events. In spite of the most dear and agreeable companions, in spite of their most earnest solicitations, in spite of entreaties, railleries, or reproaches, rigorously keep your hour. Rise up precisely at your time, and retire without ceremony. Keep your hour, notwithstanding the most pressing business: lay all things by till the morning. Be it ever so great a cross, ever so great self denial, keep your hour, or all is over.

4. I advise you, fourthly, Be steady. Keep your hour of rising, without intermission. Do not rise two mornings, and lie in bed the third; but what you do once, do always. "But my head aches." Do not regard that. It will soon be over. "But I am uncommonly drowsy; my eyes are quite heavy." Then you must not parley; otherwise it is a lost case; but start up at once. And if your drowsiness does not go off, lie down for awhile, an hour or two after. But let nothing make a breach upon this rule, rise and dress yourself at your hour.

5. Perhaps you will say, "The advice is good; but it comes too late: I have made a breach already. I did rise constantly for a season, nothing hindered me. But I gave way by little and little, and I have now left it off for a considerable time!" Then, in the name of God begin again! Begin to morrow; or rather to night, by going to bed early, in spite of either company or business. Begin with more self diffidence than before, but with more confidence in God. Only follow these few rules, and my soul for yours, God will give you the victory. In a little time the difficulty will be over: but the benefit will last for ever.

6. If you say, "but I cannot do now as I did then; for I am not what I was. I have many disorders, my spirits are low, my hands shake: I am all relaxed." I answer: All these are nervous symptoms; and they all partly arise from your taking too much sleep: nor is it probable they will ever be removed, unless you remove the cause. Therefore, on this very account, (not only punish yourself for your folly and unfaithfulness, but,) in order to recover your health and strength, resume your early rising. You have no other way: you have nothing else to do. You have no other possible means of recovering, in any tolerable degree, your health both of body and mind. Do not murder yourself outright. Do not run on in the path that leads to the gates of death! As I said before, so I say again, in the name of God, this very day, set out anew. True, it will be more difficult than it was at the beginning. But bear the difficulty which you have brought upon yourself, and it will not last long. The Sun of righteousness will soon arise again, and will heal both your soul and your body.

7. But do not imagine that this single point, rising early, will suffice to make you a Christian. No: although that single point, the not rising, may keep you a heathen, void of the whole Christian spirit; although this alone, (especially if you had once conquered it,) will keep you cold, formal, heartless, dead; and make it impossible for you to get one step forward in vital holiness; yet this alone will go but a little way to make you a real Christian. It is but one step out of many; but it is one. And having taken this, go forward. Go on to universal self denial, to temperance in all things; to a firm resolution of taking up daily every cross whereto you are called. Go on, in a full pursuit of all the mind that was in Christ, of inward and then outward holiness: so shall you be not almost, but altogether a Christian: so shall you finish your course with joy: you shall awake up after his likeness, and be satisfied

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Sermon XCIX.—*On Family Religion.*

"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord," Josh. xxiv, 15.

1. In the foregoing verses we read, that Joshua, now grown old, "gathered the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel, for their heads, for their judges and officers, and they presented themselves before the Lord," verse 1. And Joshua rehearsed to them the great things which God had done for their fathers, verses 2–13; concluding with that strong exhortation; "Now, therefore, fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side the flood, (Jordan,) and in Egypt," verse 14. Can any thing be more astonishing than this! That even in Egypt, yea, and in the wilderness, where they were daily fed, and both day and night guided by miracle, the Israelites, in general, should worship idols, in flat defiance of the Lord their God! He proceeds: "If it seemeth evil to you to serve the Lord, choose ye this day whom ye will serve: whether the gods your fathers served on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land ye dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord"

2. A resolution this worthy of a hoary headed saint, who had had large experience, from his youth up, of the goodness of the Master to whom he had devoted himself, and the advantages of his service. How much is it to be wished that all who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, all whom he has brought out of the land of Egypt, out of the bondage of sin,—those especially who are united together in Christian fellowship,—would adopt this wise resolution! Then would the work of the Lord prosper in our land; then would his word run and be glorified. Then would multitudes of sinners in every place stretch out their hands unto God, until "the glory of the Lord covered the land, as the waters cover the sea."

3. On the contrary, what will the consequence be, if they do not adopt this resolution?—If family religion be neglected?—If care be not taken of the rising generation? Will not the present revival of religion in a short time die away? Will it not be as the historian speaks of the Roman state in its infancy, *Res unius ætatis?* An event that has its beginning and end, within the space of one generation? Will it not be a confirmation of that melancholy remark of Luther's, That "a revival of religion never lasts longer than one generation?" By a generation, (as he explains himself,) he means thirty years. But blessed be God this remark does not hold, with regard to the present instance: seeing this revival from its rise in the year 1729, has already lasted above fifty years.

4. Have we not already seen some of the unhappy consequences of good men's not adopting this resolution? Is there not a generation arisen, even within this period, yea, and from pious parents, that know not the Lord? That have neither his love in their hearts, nor his fear before their eyes? How many of them already "despise their fathers, and mock at the counsel of their mothers!" How many are utter strangers to real religion, to the life and power of it! And not a few have shaken off all religion, and abandoned themselves to all manner of wickedness! Now, although this may sometimes be the case, even of children educated in a pious manner, yet this case is very rare: I have met with some, but not many instances of it. The wickedness of the children is generally owing to the fault or neglect of their parents. For it is a general, though not universal rule, though it admits of some exceptions, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

5. But what is the purport of this resolution, "I and my house will serve the Lord?" In order to understand and practise this, let us, first, inquire, What it is to "serve the Lord?" Secondly, Who are included in that expression, "My house?" And thirdly, What can we do, that we and our house may serve the Lord?

I. 1. We may inquire, first, What it is to "serve the Lord," not as a Jew, but as a Christian? Not only with an outward service, (though some of the Jews undoubtedly went farther than this,) but with inward; with the service of the heart, "worshipping him in spirit and in truth." The first thing implied in this service is faith; believing in the name of the Son of God. We cannot perform an acceptable service to God, till we believe on Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. Here the spiritual worship of God begins. As soon as any one has the witness in himself, as soon as he can say, "The life that I now live, I live by faith in

the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me," he is able truly to "serve the Lord."

2. As soon as he believes, he loves God, which is another thing implied in "serving the Lord." "We love him, because he first loved us;" of which faith is the evidence. The love of a pardoning God is "shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." Indeed this love may admit of a thousand degrees: but still every one, as long as he believes, may truly declare before God. "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." Thou knowest that "my desire is unto thee, and unto the remembrance of thy name."

3. And if any man truly love God, he cannot but love his brother also. Gratitude to our Creator will surely produce benevolence to our fellow creatures. If we love him, we cannot but love one another, as Christ loved us. We feel our souls enlarged in love towards every child of man. And towards all the children of God we put on "bowels of kindness, gentleness, long suffering, forgiving one another," if we have a complaint against any, "even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven us."

4. One thing more is implied in "serving the Lord," namely, the obeying him; the steadily walking in all his ways, the doing his will from the heart. Like those "his servants" above, "who do his pleasure, who keep his commandments, and hearken to the voice of his words;" these, his servants below, hearken unto his voice, diligently keep his commandments, carefully avoid whatever he has forbidden, and zealously do whatever he has enjoined; studying always to have a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man.

II. "I and my house will serve the Lord," will every real Christian say. But who are included in that expression, "my house?" This is the next point to be considered.

1. The person in your house that claims your first and nearest attention, is, undoubtedly, your wife: seeing you are to love her, even as Christ hath loved the church, when he laid down his life for it, that he might "purify it unto himself, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." The same end is every husband to pursue, in all his intercourse with his wife: to use every possible means, that she may be freed from every spot, and may walk unblamable in love.

2. Next to your wife are your children: immortal spirits whom God hath, for a time, entrusted to your care, that you may train them up in all holiness, and fit them for the enjoyment of God in eternity. This is a glorious and important trust; seeing one soul is of more value than all the world beside. Every child, therefore, you are to watch over with the utmost care, that when you are called to give an account of each to the Father of spirits, you may give your accounts with joy and not with grief.

3. Your servants, of whatever kind, you are to look upon as a kind of secondary children: these, likewise, God has committed to your charge, as one that must give account. For every one under your roof that has a soul to be saved, is under your care: not only indented servants, who are legally engaged to remain with you for a term of years; not only hired servants, whether they voluntarily contract for a longer or shorter time; but also those who serve you by the week or day: for these too are, in a measure, delivered into your hands. And

it is not the will of *your* Master who is in heaven, that any of these should go out of your hands, before they have received from you something more valuable than gold or silver. Yea, and you are in a degree accountable, even for "the stranger that is within your gates." As you are particularly required, to see that he does "no manner of work" on the Lord's day, while he is within your gates; so by parity of reason, you are required, to do all that is in your power, to prevent his sinning against God in any other instance.

III. Let us inquire, in the third place, What can we do, that all these may "serve the Lord?"

1. May we not endeavour, first, To *restrain* them from all outward sin? From profane swearing; from taking the name of God in vain; from doing any needless work, or taking any pastime, on the Lord's day? This labour of love you owe even to your visitants: much more to your wife, children, and servants. The former, over whom you have the least influence, you may restrain by argument or mild persuasion. If you find that, after repeated trials, they will not yield either to one or the other, it is your bounden duty to set ceremony aside, and to dismiss them from your house. Servants also, whether by the day, or for a longer space, if you cannot reclaim, either by reasoning, added to your example, or by gentle or severe reproofs, though frequently repeated, you must, in any wise, dismiss from your family, though it should be ever so inconvenient.

2. But you cannot dismiss your wife, unless for the cause of fornication, that is, adultery. What can then be done, if she is habituated to any other open sin? I cannot find in the Bible, that a husband has authority to strike his wife on any account: even suppose she struck him first; unless his life were in imminent danger. I never have known one instance yet of a wife that was mended thereby. I have heard, indeed, of some such instances; but as I did not see them, I do not believe them. It seems to me, all that can be done in this case, is to be done partly by example, partly by argument or persuasion, each applied in such a manner as is dictated by Christian prudence. If evil can ever be overcome, it must be overcome by good. It cannot be overcome by evil: we cannot beat the devil with his own weapons. Therefore, if this evil cannot be overcome by good, we are called to suffer it. We are then called to say, "this is the cross which God hath chosen for me. He surely permits it for wise ends: 'let him do what seemeth him good.' Whenever he sees it to be best, he will remove his cup from me." Meantime continue in earnest prayer, knowing that with God no work is impossible; and that he will either in due time take the temptation away, or make it a blessing to your soul.

3. Your children, while they are young, you may restrain from evil, not only by advice, persuasion, and reproof, but also by *correction;* only remembering, that this means is to be used last: not till all other have been tried, and found to be ineffectual. And even then you should take the utmost care to avoid the very appearance of passion. Whatever is done should be done with mildness; nay, indeed, with kindness too. Otherwise your own spirit will suffer loss; and the child will reap little advantage.

4. But some will tell you, "all this is lost labour; a child need not to be corrected at all. Instruction, persuasion, and advice, will be suf-

ficient for any child without correction: especially if gentle reproof be added, as occasion may require." I answer, there may be particular instances, wherein this method may be successful. But you must not, in any wise, lay this down as a universal rule: unless you suppose yourself wiser than Solomon, or, to speak more properly, wiser than God. For it is God himself, who best knoweth his own creatures, that has told us expressly, "He that spareth the rod, hateth the child: but he that loveth him, chasteneth him betimes," Prov. xiii, 24. And upon this is grounded that plain commandment, directed to all that fear God, "Chasten thy son while there is hope; and let not thy soul spare for his crying," Chap. xix, 18.

5. May we not endeavour, secondly, to *instruct* them? To take care that every person who is under our roof, have all such knowledge as is necessary to salvation? To see that our wife, servants, and children, be taught all those things which belong to their eternal peace? In order to this you should provide that not only your wife, but your servants also, may enjoy all the public means of instruction. On the Lord's day in particular, you should so forecast what is necessary to be done at home, that they may have an opportunity of attending all the ordinances of God. Yea, and you should take care, that they have some time every day for reading, meditation, and prayer. And you should inquire whether they do actually employ that time, in the exercises for which it is allowed. Neither should any day pass without family prayer, seriously and solemnly performed.

6. You should particularly endeavour to instruct your children, early, plainly, frequently, and patiently. Instruct them *early*, from the first hour that you perceive reason begins to dawn. Truth may then begin to shine upon the mind far earlier than we are apt to suppose. And whoever watches the first openings of the understanding, may, by little and little, supply fit matter for it to work upon, and may turn the eye of the soul towards good things, as well as towards bad or trifling ones. Whenever a child begins to speak, you may be assured reason begins to work. I know no cause why a parent should not just then begin to speak of the best things, the things of God. And from that time no opportunity should be lost, of instilling all truths as they are capable of receiving.

7. But the speaking to them early, will not avail, unless you likewise speak to them *plainly*. Use such words as little children may understand, just such as they use themselves. Carefully observe the few ideas which they have already, and endeavour to graft what you say upon them. To take a little example: bid the child look up; and ask, "What do you see there?" "The sun?" "See how bright it is! Feel how warm it shines upon your hand! Look, how it makes the grass and the flowers to grow, and the trees and every thing look green! But God, though you cannot see him, is above the sky, and is a deal brighter than the sun! It is he, it is God that made the sun, and you and me, and every thing. It is he that makes the grass and the flowers grow; that makes the trees green, and the fruit to come upon them! Think what he can do! He can do whatever he pleases. He can strike me or you dead in a moment! But he loves you: he loves to do you good. He loves to make you happy. Should not you then love *him?* You love *me*, because I love you and do you good. But it is God

that makes me love you. Therefore you should love him. And he will teach you how to love him."

8. While you are speaking in this, or some such manner, you should be continually lifting up your heart to God, beseeching him to open the eyes of their understanding, and to pour his light upon them. He, and he alone, can make them to differ herein from the beasts that perish. He alone can apply your words to their hearts: without which all your labour will be in vain. But whenever the Holy Ghost teaches, there is no delay in learning.

9. But if you would see the fruit of your labour, you must teach them not only early and plainly, but *frequently* too. It would be of little or no service to do it only once or twice a week. How often do you feed their bodies? Not less than three times a day. And is the soul of less value than the body? Will you not then feed this as often? If you find this a tiresome task, there is certainly something wrong in your own mind. You do not love them enough; or you do not love him, who is your Father and their Father. Humble yourself before him! Beg that he would give you more love; and love will make the labour light.

10. But it will not avail to teach them both early, plainly, and frequently, unless you *persevere* therein. Never leave off, never intermit your labour of love, till you see the fruit of it. But in order to this, you will find the absolute need of being endued with power from on high: without which, I am persuaded, none ever had, or will have patience sufficient for the work. Otherwise the inconceivable dulness of some children, and the giddiness or perverseness of others, would induce them to give up the irksome task, and let them follow their own imagination.

11. And suppose after you have done this, after you have taught your children from their early infancy, in the plainest manner you could, omitting no opportunity, and persevering therein, you did not presently see any fruit of your labour, you must not conclude that there will be none. Possibly the "bread which you have cast upon the waters" may be "found after many days." The seed which has long remained in the ground, may, at length, spring up into a plentiful harvest. Especially if you do not restrain prayer before God, if you continue instant herein with all supplication. Meantime whatever the effect of this be upon others, your reward is with the Most High.

12. Many parents, on the other hand, presently see the fruit of the seed they have sown, and have the comfort of observing, that their children grow in grace in the same proportion as they grow in years. Yet they have not done all. They have still upon their hands another task, sometimes of no small difficulty. Their children are now old enough to go to school. But to what school is it advisable to send them?

13. Let it be remembered, that I do not speak to the wild, giddy, thoughtless world, but to those that fear God. I ask, then, for what end do you send your children to school? "Why, that they may be fit to live in the world." In which world do you mean? This or the next? Perhaps you thought of this world only; and had forgot that there is a world to come: yea, and one that will last for ever! Pray take this into your account and send them to such masters as will keep it always before their eyes. Otherwise to send them to school, (permit me to speak plainly,) is little better than sending them to the devil. At all

events, then, send your boys, if you have any concern for their souls, not to any of the large public schools; (for they are nurseries of all manner of wickedness;) but a private school, kept by some pious man, who endeavours to instruct a small number of children in religion and learning together.

14. "But what shall I do with my girls?" By no means send them to a large boarding school. In these seminaries too the children teach one another pride, vanity, affectation, intrigue, artifice, and in short, every thing which a Christian woman ought not to learn. Suppose a girl were well inclined, yet what would she do in a crowd of children, not one of whom has any thought of God, or the least concern for her soul? Is it likely, is it possible she should retain any fear of God, or any thought of saving her soul in such company? Especially as their whole conversation points another way, and turns upon things which one would wish she would never think of. I never yet knew a pious, sensible woman that had been bred at a large boarding school, who did not aver, one might as well send a young maid to be bred in Drury Lane.

15. "But where then shall I send my girls?"—If you cannot breed them up yourself, (as my mother did, who bred up seven daughters to years of maturity,) send them to some mistress that truly fears God; one whose life is a pattern to her scholars, and who has only so many, that she can watch over each, as one that must give account to God. Forty years ago I did not know such a mistress in England; but you may now find several: you may find such a mistress, and such a school, at Highgate, at Deptford, near Bristol, in Chester, or near Leeds.

16. We may suppose your sons have now been long enough at school, and you are thinking of some business for them. Before you determine any thing on this head, see that your eye be single. Is it so? Is it your view, to please God herein? It is well, if you take him into your account! But surely, if you love or fear God yourself, this will be your first consideration;—In what business will your son be most likely to love and serve God? In what employment will he have the greatest advantage, for laying up treasure in heaven? I have been shocked above measure, in observing how little this is attended to, even by pious parents! Even these consider only how he may get most money: not how he may get most holiness! Even these, upon this glorious motive, send him to a heathen master, and into a family where there is not the very form, much less the power of religion! Upon this motive they fix him in a business, which will necessarily expose him to such temptations as will leave him not a probability, if a possibility, of serving God. Oh savage parents! Unnatural, diabolical cruelty!—If you believe there is another world.

"But what shall I do?" Set God before your eyes, and do all things with a view to please him. Then you will find a master, of whatever profession, that loves, or, at least, fears God; and you will find a family, wherein is the form of religion, if not the power also. Your son may, nevertheless, serve the devil if he will; but it is probable, he will not. And do not regard, if he get less money, provided he get more holiness. It is enough, though he have less of earthly goods, if he secure the possession of heaven.

17. There is one circumstance more, wherein you will have great need of the wisdom from above. Your son or your daughter is now of

age to marry, and desires your advice relative to it. Now you know what the world calls a *good match*; one whereby much money is gained. Undoubtedly it is so, if it be true, that money always brings happiness. But I doubt it is not true: money seldom brings happiness, either in this world or the world to come. Then let no man deceive you with vain words: riches and happiness seldom dwell together. Therefore, if you are wise, you will not seek riches for your children, by their marriage. See that your eye be single in this also: aim simply at the glory of God, and the real happiness of your children, both in time and eternity. It is a melancholy thing to see how Christian parents rejoice, in selling their son or their daughter to a wealthy heathen! And do you seriously call this, *a good match!* Thou fool, by parity of reason, thou mayest call hell *a good lodging*, and the devil *a good master*. Oh learn a better lesson from a better Master! "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," both for thyself and thy children, "and all other things shall be added unto you."

18. It is undoubtedly true, that if you are steadily determined to walk in this path; to endeavour by every possible means, that you and your house may thus serve the Lord; that every member of your family may worship him, not only in form, but in spirit and in truth; you will have need to use all the grace, all the courage, all the wisdom which God has given you. For you will find such hinderances in the way, as only the mighty power of God can enable you to break through. You will have all the *saints of the world* to grapple with, who will think, you carry things too far. You will have all the powers of darkness against you, employing both force and fraud; and, above all, the deceitfulness of your own heart; which, if you will hearken to it, will supply you with many reasons, why you should be a *little more* conformable to the world. But as you have begun, go on in the name of the Lord, and in the power of his might! Set the smiling, and the frowning world, with the prince thereof, at defiance. Follow reason, and the oracles of God; not the fashions and customs of men. "Keep thyself pure." Whatever others do, let you and your house "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour." Let you, your yoke fellow, your children, and your servants, be all on the Lord's side; sweetly drawing together in one yoke, walking in all his commandments and ordinances, till every one of you "shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour!"

SERMON C.—*On the Education of Children.*

"Train up a child in the way wherein he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it," Prov. xxii, 6.

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1. WE must not imagine, that these words are to be understood in an absolute sense, as if no child that had been trained up in the way wherein he should go, had ever departed from it. Matter of fact will by no means agree with this. So far from it, that it has been a common observation, Some of the best parents have the worst children. It is true, this might sometimes be the case, because good men have not always a good understanding. And without this, it is hardly to be expected that they will know how to train up their children. Besides

those who are in other respects good men, have often too much easiness of temper; so that they go no farther in restraining their children from evil, than old Eli did, when he said gently, "Nay, my sons, the report I hear of you is not good." This then is no contradiction to the assertion; for their children are not "trained up in the way wherein they should go." But it must be acknowledged, some have been trained therein with all possible care and diligence; and yet before they were old, yea, in the strength of their years, they did utterly depart from it.

2. The words then must be understood with some limitation, and then they contain an unquestionable truth. It is a general, though not a universal promise, and many have found the happy accomplishment of it. As this is the most probable method for making their children pious, which any parents can take, so it generally, although not always, meets with the desired success. The God of their fathers is with their children: he blesses their endeavours; and they have the satisfaction of leaving their religion, as well as their worldly substance, to those that descend from them.

3. But what is "the way wherein a child should go?" And how shall we "train them up" therein? The ground of this is admirably well laid down by Mr. Law, in his "Serious Call to a Devout Life." Part of his words are:—

"Had we continued perfect, as God created the first man, perhaps the perfection of our nature had been a sufficient self instructer for every one. But as sickness and diseases have created the necessity of medicines and physicians, so the disorders of our rational nature have introduced the necessity of education and tutors.

"And as the only end of a physician is, to restore nature to its own state, so the only end of education is, to restore our rational nature to its proper state. Education, therefore, is to be considered, as reason borrowed at second hand, which is, as far as it can, to supply the loss of original perfection. And as physic may justly be called the art of restoring health, so education should be considered in no other light, than as the art of recovering to man his rational perfection.

"This was the end pursued by the youths that attended upon Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato. Their every day lessons and instructions were so many lectures upon the nature of man, his true end, and the right use of his faculties: upon the immortality of the soul, its relation to God; the agreeableness of virtue to the divine nature: upon the necessity of temperance, justice, mercy, and truth, and the folly of indulging our passions.

"Now as Christianity has, as it were, new created the moral and religious world, and set every thing that is reasonable, wise, holy, and desirable, in its true point of light; so one would expect, the education of children should be as much mended by Christianity, as the doctrines of religion are.

"As it has introduced a new state of things, and so fully informed us of the nature of man and the end of his creation; as it has fixed all our goods and evils, taught us the means of purifying our souls, of pleasing God, and being happy eternally; one might naturally suppose that every Christian country abounded with schools, not only for teaching a few questions and answers of a catechism, but for the forming

training, and practising children in such a course of life, as the sublimest doctrines of Christianity require.

"An education under Pythagoras or Socrates had no other end, but to teach children to think and act as Pythagoras and Socrates did.

"And is it not reasonable to suppose that a Christian education should have no other end but to teach them how to think, and judge, and act, according to the strictest rules of Christianity?

"At least one would suppose, that in all Christian schools, the teaching them to begin their lives in the spirit of Christianity, in such abstinence, humility, sobriety, and devotion, as Christianity requires, should not only be more, but a hundred times more regarded than any or all things else.

"For those that educate us should imitate our guardian angels; suggest nothing to our minds, but what is wise and holy; help us to discover every false judgment of our minds, and to subdue every wrong passion in our hearts.

"And it is as reasonable to expect and require all this benefit from a Christian education, as to require that physic should strengthen all that is right in our nature, and remove all our diseases."

4. Let it be carefully remembered all this time, that God, not man, is the physician of souls; that it is he, and none else, who giveth medicine to heal our natural sickness; that all "the help which is done upon earth, he doeth it himself;" that none of all the children of men is able to "bring a clean thing out of an unclean;" and, in a word, that, "it is God who worketh in us, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure." But it is generally his pleasure to work by his creatures; to help man by man. He honours men, to be in this sense, "workers together with him." By this means the reward is ours, while the glory redounds to him.

5. This being premised, in order to see distinctly what is the way wherein we should train up a child, let us consider, what are the diseases of his nature? What are those spiritual diseases, which every one that is born of a woman, brings with him into the world?

Is not the first of these *atheism?* After all that has been so plausibly written concerning "the innate idea of God;" after all that has been said, of its being common to all men, in all ages and nations; it does not appear, that man has naturally any more idea of God, than any of the beasts of the field: he has no knowledge of God at all; no fear of God at all; neither is God in all his thoughts. Whatever change may afterwards be wrought, (whether by the grace of God, or by his own reflection or by education,) he is, by nature, a mere atheist.

6. Indeed it may be said, that every man is by nature, as it were, his own god. He worships himself. He is, in his own conception, absolute lord of himself. Dryden's hero speaks only according to nature when he says, "Myself am king of *me*." He seeks himself in all things. He pleases himself. And why not? Who is lord over him? *His own will* is his only law: he does this or that because it is his good pleasure. In the same spirit as the "son of the morning" said in old times, "I will sit upon the sides of the north," he says, "*I will* do thus or thus." And do we not find sensible men on every side, who are of the self same spirit? who if asked, "Why did you do this?" will readily answer, "because I had a mind to it."

7. Another evil disease which every human soul brings into the world with him, is *pride;* a continual proneness to think of himself more highly than he ought to think. Every man can discern more or less of this disease, in every one,—but himself. And, indeed, if he could discern it in himself, it would subsist no longer; for he would then, in consequence, think of himself just as he ought to think.

8. The next disease, natural to every human soul, born with every man, is *love of the world.* Every man is, by nature, a lover of the creature, instead of the Creator: a "lover of pleasure," in every kind, "more than a lover of God." He is a slave to foolish and hurtful desires, in one kind or another; either to the "desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, or the pride of life." "The desire of the flesh," is a propensity to seek happiness in what gratifies one or more of the outward senses. "The desire of the eyes," is a propensity to seek happiness in what gratifies the internal sense, the imagination, either by things grand, or new, or beautiful. "The pride of life," seems to mean a propensity to seek happiness in what gratifies the sense of honour. To this head is usually referred, "the love of money;" one of the basest passions that can have place in the human heart. But it may be doubted whether this be not an acquired, rather than a natural distemper.

9. Whether this be a natural disease or not, it is certain, *anger* is. The ancient philosopher defines it, "a sense of injury received, with a desire of revenge." Now, was there ever any one born of a woman, who did not labour under this? Indeed, like other diseases of the mind, it is far more violent in some than in others. But it is *furor brevis*, as the poet speaks: it is a real, though short madness, wherever it is.

10. A *deviation from truth* is equally natural to all the children of men. One said in his haste, "All men are liars:" but we may say, upon cool reflection, all natural men will, upon a close temptation, vary from, or disguise the truth. If they do not offend against veracity, if they do not say what is false, yet they frequently offend against *simplicity.* They use art; they hang out false colours; they practise either simulation or dissimulation. So that you cannot say truly of any person living, till grace has altered nature, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile."

11. Every one is likewise prone by nature, to speak or act *contrary to justice.* This is another of the diseases which we bring with us into the world. All human creatures are naturally partial to themselves, and, when opportunity offers, have more regard to their own interest or pleasure, than strict justice allows. Neither is any man by nature *merciful*, as our heavenly Father is merciful; but all, more or less, transgress that glorious rule of mercy as well as justice, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, the same do unto them."

12. Now if these are the general diseases of human nature, is it not the grand end of education to cure them? And is it not the part of all those to whom God has entrusted the education of children, to take all possible care, first not to increase, not to feed any of these diseases; (as the generality of parents constantly do;) and next, to use every possible means of healing them?

13. To come to particulars. What can parents do, and mothers more especially, to whose care our children are necessarily committed in their tender years, with regard to the *atheism* that is natural to all

the children of men? How is this fed by the generality of parents, even those that love, or, at least, fear God; while, in spending hours perhaps days with their children, they hardly name the name of God? Meantime, they talk of a thousand other things in the world that are round about them. Will not then the things of the present world, which surround these children on every side, naturally take up their thoughts, and set God at a greater distance from them, (if that be possible,) than he was before? Do not parents feed the atheism of their children farther, by ascribing the works of creation to *nature?* Does not the common way of talking about nature, leave God quite out of the question? Do they not feed this disease, whenever they talk in the hearing of their children, of any thing *happening* so or so? Of things coming by *chance?* Of good or ill *fortune?* As also when they ascribe this or that event to the wisdom or power of men; or, indeed, to any other second causes, as if these governed the world? Yea, do they not feed it unawares, while they are talking of their own wisdom, or goodness, or power to do this or that, without expressly mentioning, that all these are the gift of God? All tends to confirm the atheism of their children, and to keep God out of their thoughts.

14. But we are by no means clear of their blood, if we only go thus far, if we barely do not feed their disease. What can be done to cure it? From the first dawn of reason continually inculcate, God is in this and every place. God made you, and me, and the earth, and the sun, and the moon, and every thing. And every thing is his: heaven, and earth, and all that is therein. God orders all things: he makes the sun shine, and the wind blow, and the trees bear fruit. Nothing comes by chance: that is a silly word: there is no such thing as chance. As God made the world, so he governs the world, and every thing that is in it. Not so much as a sparrow falls to the ground, without the will of God. And as he governs all things, so he governs all men, good and bad, little and great. He gives them all the power and wisdom they have. And he overrules all. He gives us all the goodness we have: every good thought, and word, and work, are from him. Without him we can neither think any thing right, nor do any thing right. Thus it is, we are to inculcate upon them, that God is all in all.

15. Thus may we counteract, and, by the grace of God assisting us, gradually cure the natural atheism of our children. But what can we do to cure their *self will?* It is equally rooted in their nature, and is, indeed, the original idolatry, which is not confined to one age or country, but is common to all the nations under heaven. And how few parents are to be found even among Christians, even among them that truly fear God, who are not guilty of this matter? Who do not continually feed and increase this grievous distemper in their children? To let them have their own will, does this most effectually. To let them take their own way, is the sure method of increasing their self will seven fold. But who has the resolution to do otherwise? One parent in a hundred? Who can be so singular, so cruel, as not, more or less to *humour* her child? "And why should you not? What harm can there be in this, which every body does?" The harm is, that it strengthens their will more and more, till it will neither bow to God nor man. To humour children, is, as far as in us lies, to make their disease incurable. A wise parent, on the other hand, should begin to

break their will, the first moment it appears. In the whole art of Christian education there is nothing more important than this. The will of a parent is to a little child in the place of the will of God. Therefore studiously teach them to submit to this while they are children, that they may be ready to submit to his will, when they are men. But in order to carry this point, you will need incredible firmness and resolution for after you have once begun, you must never more give way. You must hold on still in an even course; you must never intermit your attention for one hour; otherwise you will lose your labour.

16. If you are not willing to lose all the labour you have been at, to break the will of your child, to bring his will into subjection to yours, that it may be afterwards subject to the will of God, there is one advice, which, though little known, should be particularly attended to. It may seem a small circumstance; but it is of more consequence than one can easily imagine. It is this: never, on any account, give a child any thing that it cries for. For it is a true observation, (and you may make the experiment as often as you please,) if you give a child what he cries for, you pay him for crying; and then he will certainly cry again. "But if I do not give it him when he cries, he will scream all day long." If he does, it is your own fault; for it is in your power effectually to prevent it: for no mother need suffer a child to cry aloud after it is a year old. "Why it is impossible to hinder it." So many suppose; but it is an entire mistake. I am a witness of the direct contrary; and so are many others. My own mother had ten children, each of whom had spirit enough. Yet not one of them was ever heard to cry aloud, after it was a year old. A gentlewoman of Sheffield, (several of whose children I suppose are alive still) assured me she had the same success with regard to her eight children. When some were objecting to the possibility of this, Mr. Parson Greenwood, (well known in the north of England) replied, "this cannot be impossible; I have had the proof of it in my own family. Nay, of more than this. I had six children by my former wife: and she suffered none of them to cry aloud, after they were ten months old. And yet none of their spirits were so broken, as to unfit them for any of the offices of life." This, therefore, may be done by any woman of sense, who may thereby save herself abundance of trouble, and prevent that disagreeable noise, the squalling of young children, from being heard under her roof. But I allow, none but a woman of sense will be able to effect this. Yea, and a woman of such patience and resolution as only the grace of God can give. However, this is doubtless the more excellent way: and she that is able to receive it, let her receive it!

17. It is hard to say, whether self will or *pride* be the more fatal distemper. It was chiefly pride that threw down so many of the stars of heaven, and turned angels into devils. But what can parents do, in order to check this until it can be radically cured?

First: Beware of adding fuel to the flame; of feeding the disease which you should cure. Almost all parents are guilty of doing this, by praising their children to their face. If you are sensible of the folly and cruelty of this, see that you sacredly abstain from it. And in spite of either fear or complaisance, go one step farther. Not only do not encourage, but do not suffer others to do what you dare not do yourself. How few parents are sufficiently aware of this? Or, at least

sufficiently resolute to practise it. To check every one at the first word, that would praise them before their face. Even those who would not, on any account, *sit attentive to their own applause*, nevertheless do not scruple to sit attentive to the applause of their children. Yea, and that to their face! Oh consider! Is not this the spreading a net for their feet? Is it not a grievous incentive to pride, even if they are praised for what is truly praiseworthy? Is it not doubly hurtful, if they are praised for things not truly praiseworthy: things of an indifferent nature, as sense, good breeding, beauty, elegance of apparel? This is liable not only to hurt the heart, but their understanding also. It has a manifest and direct tendency, to infuse pride and folly together: to pervert both their taste and judgment; teaching them to value what is dung and dross in the sight of God.

18. If, on the contrary, you desire without loss of time to strike at the root of their pride, teach your children as soon as possibly you can, that they are fallen spirits, that they are fallen short of that glorious image of God, wherein they were first created; that they are not now, as they were once, incorruptible pictures of the God of glory; bearing the express likeness of the wise, the good, the holy Father of spirits; but more ignorant, more foolish, and more wicked, than they can possibly conceive. Show them that, in pride, passion, and revenge, they are now like the devil. And that in foolish desires and grovelling appetites, they are like the beasts of the field. Watch over them diligently in this respect, that whenever occasion offers, you may, "pride in its earliest motions find," and check the very first appearance of it.

If you ask, "But how shall I encourage them when they do well, if I am never to commend them?" I answer, I did not affirm this: I did not say, "you are *never* to commend them." I know many writers assert this, and writers of eminent piety. They say, "To commend man is to rob God;" and therefore condemn it altogether. But what say the Scriptures? I read there, that our Lord himself frequently commended his own disciples; and the great apostle scruples not to commend the Corinthians, Philippians, and divers others to whom he writes. We may not, therefore, condemn this altogether. But I say, use it exceeding sparingly. And when you use it, let it be with the utmost caution, directing them, at the same moment, to look upon all they have as the free gift of God; and with the deepest self abasement to say, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name give the praise!"

19. Next to self will and pride, the most fatal disease with which we are born, is "love of the world." But how studiously do the generality of parents cherish this in its several branches? They cherish "the desire of the flesh," that is, the tendency to seek happiness in pleasing the outward senses, by studying to enlarge the pleasure of tasting in their children to the uttermost: not only giving them before they are weaned other things beside milk, the natural food of children; but giving them both before and after, any sort of meat or drink that they will take. Yea, they entice them, long before nature requires it, to take wine, or strong drink; and provide them with comfits, gingerbread, raisins, and whatever fruit they have a mind to. They feed in them "the desire of the eyes," the propensity to seek happiness in pleasing the imagination, by giving them pretty playthings, glittering toys, shining buckles, or buttons, fine clothes, red shoes, laced hats,

needless ornaments, as ribbands, necklaces, ruffles; yea, and by proposing any of these as *rewards* for doing their duty, which is stamping a great value upon them. With equal care and attention they cherish in them the third branch of the love of the world, "the pride of life;" the propensity to seek their happiness in the "honour that cometh of men." Nor is the love of money forgotten: many an exhortation do they hear, on *securing the main chance;* many a lecture, exactly agreeing with that of the old heathen, "*Si possis, recte; si non, quocunque modo rem:*" "Get money, honestly if you can; but if not, get money." And they are carefully taught to look on riches and honour as the reward of all their labours.

20. In direct opposition to all this, a wise and truly kind parent will take the utmost care, not to cherish in her children the desire of the flesh; their natural propensity to seek happiness in gratifying the outward sense. With this view she will suffer them to taste no food but milk, till they are weaned; which a thousand experiments show is most safely and easily done at the seventh month. And then accustom them to the most simple food, chiefly of vegetables. She may inure them to taste only one kind of food, beside bread, at dinner, and constantly to breakfast and sup on milk, either cold or heated, but not boiled. She may use them to sit by her at meals; and ask for nothing, but take what is given them. She need never, till they are at least nine or ten years old, let them know the taste of tea; or use any other drink at meals, but water or small beer. And they will never desire to taste either meat or drink between meals, if not accustomed thereto. If fruit, comfits, or any thing of the kind be given them, let them not touch it but at meals. And never propose any of these as a reward; but teach them to look higher than this.

But herein a difficulty will arise, which it will need much resolution to conquer. Your servants, who will not understand your plan, will be continually giving little things to your children, and thereby undoing all your work. This you must prevent, if possible, by warning them when they first come into your house, and repeating the warning from time to time. If they *will* do it notwithstanding, you must turn them away. Better lose a good servant than spoil a good child.

Possibly you may have another difficulty to encounter, and one of a still more trying nature. Your mother, or your husband's mother may live with you; and you will do well to show her all possible respect. But let her on no account have the least share in the management of your children. She would undo all that you had done; she would give them their own will in all things. She would humour them to the destruction of their souls, if not their bodies too. In four score years I have not met with one woman that knew how to manage grand children. My own mother, who governed her children so well, could never govern one grand child. In every other point obey your mother. Give up your will to hers. But with regard to the management of your children, steadily keep the reins in your own hands.

21. A wise and kind parent will be equally cautious, of feeding "the desire of the eyes" in her children. She will give them no pretty playthings, no glittering toys, shining buckles or buttons, fine or gay clothes; no needless ornaments of any kind; nothing that can attract the eye. Nor will she suffer any other person to give them what she

will not give them herself. Any thing of the kind that is offered, may be either civilly refused, or received and laid by. If they are displeased at this, you cannot help it. Complaisance, yea, and temporal interest, must needs be set aside, when the eternal interests of your children are at stake.

Your pains will be well requited, if you can inspire them early with a contempt of all finery; and, on the other hand, with a love and esteem for neat plainness of dress. Teaching them to associate the ideas of plainness and modesty; and those of a fine and a loose woman. Likewise, instil into them, as early as possible, a fear and contempt of pomp and grandeur; an abhorrence and dread of the love of money; and a deep conviction, that riches cannot give happiness. Wean them, therefore, from all these false ends: habituate them to make God their end in all things; and inure them, in all they do, to aim at knowing, loving, and serving God.

22. Again: The generality of parents feed *anger* in their children; yea, the worst part of it; that is, revenge. The silly mother says, "What, hurt my child? Give me a blow for it." What horrid work is this! Will not the old murderer teach them this lesson fast enough? Let the Christian parent spare no pains to teach them just the contrary. Remind them of the words of our blessed Lord: "It was said of old, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil." Not by returning evil for evil. Rather than this, "If a man take away thy cloak, let him take thy coat also." Remind him of the words of the great apostle: "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves. For it is written, Vengeance is mine: I will repay, saith the Lord."

23. The generality of parents feed and increase the natural *falsehood* of their children. How often may we hear that senseless word: "No, it was not *you;* it was not my child that did it: say, it was the cat." What amazing folly is this! Do you feel no remorse, while you are putting a lie in the mouth of your child, before it can speak plain? And do not you think, it will make a good proficiency when it comes to years of discretion? Others teach them both dissimulation and lying, by their unreasonable severity; and yet others, by admiring and applauding their ingenious lies and cunning tricks. Let the wise parent, on the contrary, teach them to "put away all lying;" and, both in little things and great, in jest or earnest, speak the very truth from their heart. Teach them that the author of all falsehood is the devil, who "is a liar and the father of it." Teach them to abhor and despise, not only lying, but all equivocating, all cunning and dissimulation. Use every means to give them a love of truth; of veracity, sincerity, and simplicity; and of openness both of spirit and behaviour.

24. Most parents increase the natural tendency to *injustice* in their children, by conniving at their wronging each other; if not laughing at, or even applauding their witty contrivances to cheat one another. Beware of every thing of this kind: and from their very infancy, sow the seeds of justice in their hearts; and train them up in the exactest practice of it. If possible, teach them the love of justice, and that in the least things as well as the greatest. Impress upon their minds the old proverb; "He that will steal a penny, will steal a pound." Habituate them to render unto all their due, even to the uttermost farthing

25. Many parents connive, likewise, at the *ill nature* of their children, and thereby strengthen it. But truly affectionate parents will not indulge them in any kind or degree of *unmercifulness*. They will not suffer them to vex their brothers or sisters, either by word or deed. They will not suffer them to hurt or give pain to any thing that has life. They will not permit them to rob birds' nests; much less to kill any thing without necessity: not even snakes, which are as innocent as worms, or toads, which, notwithstanding their ugliness, and the ill name they lie under, have been proved over and over, to be as harmless as flies. Let them extend, in its measure, the rule of doing as they would be done by, to every animal whatsoever. Ye that are truly kind parents, in the morning, in the evening, and all the day beside, press upon all your children, "to walk in love, as Christ also loved us, and gave himself for us;" to mind that one point, "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him."

SERMON CI.—*On Obedience to Parents.*

"Children, obey your parents in all things," Col. iii, 20.

1 IT has been a subject of controversy for many years, whether there are any innate principles in the mind of man? But it is allowed, on all hands, if there be any practical principles naturally implanted in the soul, that we ought to honour our parents, will claim this character almost before any other. It is enumerated among those universal principles by the most ancient authors; and is, undoubtedly, found even among most savages, in the most barbarous nations. We may trace it through all the extent of Europe and Asia; through the wilds of Africa, and the forests of America. And it is not less, but more observable in the most civilized nations. So it was, first in the eastern parts of the world, which were for so many ages, the seat of empire, of learning, and politeness, as well as of religion. So it was afterwards, in all the Grecian states, and throughout the whole Roman empire. In this respect it is plain, they that "have not the [written] law, are a law unto themselves;" showing "the work [the substance] of the law," to be "written in their hearts."

2. And wherever God has revealed his will to man, this law has been a part of that revelation. It has been herein opened afresh, considerably enlarged, and enforced in the strongest manner. In the Jewish revelation, the notorious breakers thereof were punishable with death. And this was one of the laws which our blessed Lord did not come to destroy, but to fulfil. Accordingly he severely reproved the scribes and Pharisees, for making it void through their traditions: clearly showing that the obligation thereof extended to all ages. It is the substance of this which St. Paul delivers to the Ephesians, chap. vi, 1; "Children, obey your parents in the Lord;" and again in these words to the Colossians, "Children, obey your parents in all things."

3. It is observable, that the apostle enforces this duty by a threefold encouragement: first, to the Ephesians, he adds, "For this is right:" it is an instance of justice as well as mercy. It is no more than

their due: it is what we owe to them, for the very being which we have received from them. Secondly, "This is acceptable to the Lord:" it is peculiarly pleasing to the great Father of men and angels, that we should pay honour and obedience to the fathers of our flesh. Thirdly, It is "the first commandment with promise:" the first to the performance whereof a peculiar promise is annexed; "that it may be well with thee, and that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." This promise has been generally understood, to include health and temporal blessings, as well as long life. And we have seen innumerable proofs, that it belongs to the Christian as well as the Jewish dispensation: many remarkable instances of its accomplishment occur even at this day.

But what is the meaning of these words, "Children, obey your parents in all things?" I will endeavour by the assistance of God, first, to explain, and then to apply them.

I. 1. First, I will endeavour to explain these words; and the rather, because so few people seem to understand them. Look round into the world, not the heathen, but the Christian world, nay, the reformed part of it. Look among those that have the Scriptures in their own tongue: and who is there that appears even to have heard of this? Here and there a child obeys the parent out of fear, or perhaps out of natural affection. But how many children can you find that obey their fathers and mothers, out of a sense of duty to God? And how many parents can you find, that duly inculcate this duty upon their children? I doubt a vast majority both of parents and children are totally ignorant of the whole affair. For the sake of these I will make it as plain as I can: but still I am thoroughly sensible, those that are not willing to be convinced, will no more understand what I say, than if I was talking Greek or Hebrew.

2. You will easily observe, that by *parents*, the apostle means both fathers and mothers, as he refers us to the fifth commandment, which names both the one and the other. And however human laws may vary herein, the law of God makes no difference; but lays us under the same obligation of obeying both the one and the other.

3. But before we consider, How we are to obey our parents, it may be inquired, How long we are to obey them? Are children to obey, only till they run alone? Till they go to school? Till they can read and write? Or till they are as tall as their parents? Or attain to years of discretion? Nay, if they obey only because they fear to be beaten, or because otherwise they cannot procure food and raiment, what avails such obedience? Those only who obey their parents, when they can live without them, and when they neither hope nor fear any thing from them, shall have praise from God.

4. "But is a man that is at age, or a woman that is married, under any farther obligation to obey their parents?" With regard to marriage, although it is true, that a man is to leave father and mother, and to cleave unto his wife; and, by parity of reason, she is to leave father and mother, and cleave unto her husband; (in consequence of which there may be some particular cases wherein conjugal duty must take place of filial;) yet I cannot learn, either from Scripture or reason, that marriage either cancels or lessens the general obligation of filial duty. Much less does it appear that it is either cancelled or lessened by our

having lived one and twenty years. I never understood it so, in my own case. When I had lived upwards of thirty years, I looked upon myself to stand just in the same relation to my father as I did when I was ten years old. And when I was between forty and fifty, I judged myself full as much obliged to obey my mother in every thing lawful, as I did when I was in my leading strings.

5. But what is implied in, "Children obey your parents in all things?' Certainly the first point of obedience is to do nothing which your father or mother forbids, whether it be great or small. Nothing is more plain, than that the prohibition of a parent binds every conscientious child. that is, except the thing prohibited is clearly enjoined of God. Nor indeed is this all: the matter may be carried a little farther still. A tender parent may totally disapprove what he does not care flatly to forbid. What is the duty of a child in this case? How far is that disapprobation to be regarded? Whether it would be equivalent to a prohibition or not, a person who would have a conscience void of offence, should, undoubtedly, keep on the safe side, and avoid what may perhaps be evil. It is surely the more excellent way, to do nothing which you know your parents disapprove. To act otherwise seems to imply a degree of disobedience, which one of a tender conscience would wish to avoid.

6. The second thing implied in this direction is, Do every thing which your father or mother bids, be it great or small, provided it be not contrary to any command of God. Herein God has given a power to parents, which even sovereign princes have not. The king of England, for instance, is a sovereign prince; yet he has not power to bid me do the least thing, unless the law of the land requires me so to do: for he has no power but to execute the law. The will of the king is no law to the subject. But the will of the parent is a law to the child; who is bound in conscience to submit thereto, unless it be contrary to the law of God.

7. It is with admirable wisdom, that the Father of spirits has given this direction, that as the strength of the parents supplies the want of strength, and the understanding of the parents the want of understanding in their children, till they have strength and understanding of their own; so the will of the parents may guide that of their children till they have wisdom and experience to guide themselves. This, therefore, is the very first thing, which children have to learn. That they are to obey their parents, to submit to their will in all things: and this they may be inured to, long before they understand the reason of it: and, indeed, long before they are capable of understanding any of the principles of religion. Accordingly, St. Paul directs all parents to bring up their children "in the discipline and doctrine of the Lord." For their will may be broken by proper discipline, even in their early infancy: whereas it must be a considerable time after, before they are capable of instruction. This, therefore, is the first point of all: bow down their wills from the very first dawn of reason; and by habituating them to your will, prepare them for submitting to the will of their Father which is in heaven.

8. But how few children do we find, even of six or eight years old, that understand any thing of this! Indeed, how should they understand it, seeing they have none to teach them? Are not their parents father

as well as mother, full as ignorant of the matter as themselves? Whom do you find, even among religious people, that have the least conception of it? Have not you seen the proof of it with your own eyes? Have not you been present, when a father or mother has said, "My child, do so or so?" The child, without any ceremony, answered peremptorily, "I won't." And the parent quietly passes it by, without any farther notice. And does he or she not see, that by this cruel indulgence, they are training up their child by flat rebellion against their parents, to rebellion against God? Consequently they are training him up for the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels! Did they duly consider this, they would neither eat, nor drink, nor sleep, till they had taught him a better lesson, and made him thoroughly afraid ever of giving that diabolical answer again.

9. Let me reason this case a little farther with you parents that fear God. If you do fear God, how dare you suffer a child above a year old to say, *I will do*, what you forbid, or *I won't do*, what you bid, and to go unpunished? Why do not you stop him at once, that he may never dare to say so again? Have you no bowels, no compassion for your child? No regard for his salvation or destruction? Would you suffer him to curse or swear in your presence, and take no notice of it? Why, disobedience is as certain a way to damnation as cursing and swearing. Stop him, stop him at first, in the name of God. Do not "spare the rod, and spoil the child." If you have not the heart of a tiger, do not give up your child to his own will, that is, to the devil. Though it be pain to yourself, yet pluck your offspring out of the lion's teeth. Make them submit, that they may not perish. Break their wills, that you may save their soul.

10. I cannot tell how to enforce this point sufficiently. To fix it upon your minds more strongly, permit me to add part of a letter on the subject, printed some years ago.

"In order to form the minds of children, the first thing to be done, is to conquer their will. To inform their understanding is a work of time, and must proceed by slow degrees; but the subjecting the will is a thing which must be done at once: and the sooner the better. For, by our neglecting timely correction, they contract a stubbornness, which is hardly ever to be conquered; and never without using that severity, which would be as painful to us as to the children. Therefore, I call those cruel parents, who pass for kind and indulgent; who permit their children to contract habits, which they know must be afterwards broken.

"I insist upon conquering the wills of children betimes; because this is the only foundation for a religious education. When this is thoroughly done, then a child is capable of being governed by the reason of its parent, till its own understanding comes to maturity.

"I cannot yet dismiss this subject. As self will is the root of all sin and misery, so whatever cherishes this in children, insures their after wretchedness and irreligion; and whatever checks and mortifies it, promotes their future happiness and piety. This is still more evident, if we consider that religion is nothing else but the doing the will of God, and not our own; and that self will being the grand impediment to our temporal and eternal happiness, no indulgence of it can be trivial; no denial of it unprofitable. Heaven or hell depends on

this alone. So that the parent who studies to subdue it in his children, works together with God in the saving of a soul: the parent who indulges it, does the devil's work; makes religion impracticable, salvation unattainable; and does all that in him lies, to damn his child, soul and body, for ever!

"This, therefore, I cannot but earnestly repeat, Break their wills betimes. Begin this great work before they can run alone, before they can speak plainly, or perhaps speak at all. Whatever pains it cost, conquer their stubbornness: break the will, if you would not damn the child. I conjure you not to neglect, not to delay this! Therefore, 1, Let a child from a year old, be taught to fear the rod and to cry softly. In order to this, 2, Let him have nothing he cries for; absolutely nothing, great or small; else you undo your own work. 3, At all events, from that age, make him do as he is bid, if you whip him ten times running to effect it: let none persuade you, it is cruelty to do this: it is cruelty not to do it. Break his will now, and his soul will live, and he will probably bless you to all eternity."

11. On the contrary, how dreadful are the consequences of that accursed kindness, which gives children their own wills, and does not bow down their necks from their infancy. It is chiefly owing to this, that so many religious parents bring up their children that have no religion at all; children, that when they are grown up, have no regard for them: perhaps set them at nought, and are ready to pick out their eyes! Why is this, but because their wills were not broken at first, because they were not inured from their early infancy, to obey their parents in all things, and to submit to their wills, as to the will of God! Because they were not taught from the very first dawn of reason, that the will of their parents was, to them, the will of God; that to resist it was rebellion against God, and an inlet to all ungodliness.

II. 1. This may suffice for the explication of the text: I proceed to the application of it. And permit me first to apply to you that are parents, and as such concerned to teach your children. Do you know these things yourselves? Are *you* thoroughly convinced of these important truths? Have you laid them to heart? And have you put them in practice, with regard to your own children? Have you inured them to discipline, before they were capable of instruction? Have you broken their wills from their earliest infancy? And do you still continue so to do, in opposition both to nature and custom? Did you explain to them, as soon as their understanding began to open, the reasons of your proceeding thus? Did you point out to them the will of God, as the sole law of every intelligent creature? And show them, it is the will of God, that they should obey you in all things? Do you inculcate this over and over again, till they perfectly comprehend it? Oh never be weary of this labour of love; and your labour will not always be in vain.

2. At least do not teach them to disobey, by rewarding them for disobedience. Remember! You do this every time you give them any thing because they cry for it. And herein they are apt scholars: if you reward them for crying, they will certainly cry again. So that there is no end, unless you make it a sacred rule, to give them nothing which they cry for. And the shortest way to do this is, never suffer them to cry aloud. Train them up to obedience in this one instance,

and you will easily bring them to obey in others. Why should you not begin to day? Surely you see what is the most excellent way; best for your own soul. Why then do you disobey? Because you are a coward, because you want resolution. And doubtless it requires no small patience, more than nature ever gave. But the grace of God is sufficient for you: you can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth you. This grace is sufficient to give you diligence, as well as resolution: otherwise laziness will be as great a hinderance as cowardice. For without much pains you cannot conquer: nothing can be done with a slack hand: labour on: never tire: lay line upon line, till patience has its perfect work.

3. But there is another hinderance that is full as hard to be conquered as either laziness or cowardice. It is called fondness, and is usually mistaken for love: but, oh, how widely different from it! It is real hate; and hate of the most mischievous kind; tending to destroy both body and soul in hell! Oh give not way to it any longer, no, not for a moment! Fight against it with your might! For the love of God; for the love of your children; for the love of your own soul!

4. I have one word more to say to parents; to mothers in particular. If, in spite of all the apostle can say, you encourage your children by your example to "adorn" themselves "with gold, or pearls, or costly apparel," you and they must drop into the pit together. But if they do it, though you set them a better example, still it is yours, as well as their fault. For if you did not put any ornament on your little child that you would not wear yourself; (which would be utter distraction, and far more inexcusable than putting it on your own arms or head;) yet you did not inure them to obey you from their infancy, and teach them the duty of it, from at least two years old. Otherwise they would not have dared to do any thing great or small, contrary to your will. Whenever, therefore, I see a fine dressed daughter of a plain dressed mother, I see at once the mother is defective either in knowledge or religion. Either she is ignorant of her own or her child's duty; or she has not practised what she knows.

5. I cannot dismiss this subject yet. I am pained continually, at seeing religious parents suffer their children to run into the same folly of dress, as if they had no religion at all. In God's name, why do you suffer them to vary a hair's breadth from *your* example? "Why, they will do it." They will! Whose fault is that? Why did not you break their will from their infancy? At least, do it now: better late than never. It should have been done before they were two years old. It may be done at eight or ten, though with far more difficulty. However, do it now: and accept that difficulty, as the just reward for your past neglect. Now, at least, carry your point, whatever it costs. Be not mealy mouthed; say not, like foolish Eli, "Nay, my children, it is no good report which I hear of you," instead of restraining them with a strong hand; but speak (though as calmly as possible, yet) firmly and peremptorily, "I will have it so;" and do as you say. Instil diligently into them the love of plain dress, and hatred of finery. Show them the reason of your own plainness of dress, and show it is equally reasonable for them. Bid defiance to indolence, to cowardice, to foolish fondness, and at all events, carry your point; if you love their souls, make and keep them just as plain as yourselves. And I charge

you, grandmothers, before God, do not hinder your daughters herein. Do not dare to give the child any thing which the mother denies. Never take the part of the children against the parent; never blame her before them. If you do not strengthen her authority, as you ought to do, at least do not weaken it; but if you have either sense or piety left, help her on in the work of real kindness.

6. Permit me now to apply myself to you, children; particularly you that are the children of religious parents. Indeed, if you have no fear of God before your eyes, I have no concern with you at present; but if you have, if you really fear God, and have a desire to please him, you desire to understand all his commandments, the fifth in particular. Did you ever understand it yet? Do you now understand what is your duty to your father and mother? Do you know, at least do you consider, that by the divine appointment *their* will is a law to *you?* Have you ever considered the extent of that obedience to your parents which God requires? "Children, obey your parents in all things:" no exception, but of things unlawful. Have you practised your duty in this extent? Did you ever so much as intend it?

7. Deal faithfully with your own souls. Is your conscience now clear in this matter? Do you do nothing which you know to be contrary to the will either of your father or mother? Do you never do any thing (though ever so much inclined to it) which he or she forbids? Do you abstain from every thing which they dislike, as far as you can in conscience? On the other hand, are you careful to do whatever a parent bids? Do you study and contrive how to please them? To make their lives as easy and pleasant as you can? Whoever you are that add this to your general care to please God in all things, blessed art thou of the Lord! "Thy days shall be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

8. But as for you who are little concerned about this matter; who do not make it a point of conscience to obey your parents in all things, but sometimes obey them, as it happens, and sometimes not; who frequently do what they forbid or disapprove, and neglect what they bid you do; suppose you awake out of sleep, that you begin to feel yourself a sinner, and begin to cry to God for mercy; is it any wonder that you find no answer, while you are under the guilt of unrepented sin? How can you expect mercy from God till you obey your parents? But suppose you have, by an uncommon miracle of mercy, tasted of the pardoning love of God, can it be expected, although you hunger and thirst after righteousness, after the perfect love of God, that you should ever attain it, ever be satisfied therewith, while you live in outward sin, in the wilful transgression of a known law of God, in disobedience to your parents? Is it not rather a wonder, that he has not withdrawn his Holy Spirit from you? That he still continues to strive with you, though you continually grieve his Spirit? Oh grieve him no more! By the grace of God obey them in all things from this moment! As soon as you come home, as soon as you set foot within the door, begin an entirely new course! Look upon your father and mother with new eyes See them as representing your Father which is in heaven. Endeavour, study, rejoice to please, to help, to obey them in all things. Behave not barely as their child, but as their servant for Christ's sake. Oh how will you then love one another! In a manner unknown before.

God will bless you to them, and them to you: all around will feel that God is with you of a truth. Many shall see it and praise God: and the fruit of it shall remain when both you and they are lodged in Abraham's bosom.

SERMON CII.—*On Obedience to Pastors.*

"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch over your souls as they that shall give account, that they may do this with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you," Heb. xiii, 17.

1. EXCEEDING few, not only among nominal Christians, but among truly religious men, have any clear conception of the important doctrine, which is here delivered by the apostle. Very many scarce think of it, and hardly know that there is any such direction in the Bible. And the greater part of those who know it is there, and imagine they follow it, do not understand it, but lean too much either to the right hand or to the left, to one extreme or the other. It is well known to what an extravagant height the Romanists in general carry this direction. Many of them believe, an implicit faith is due to the doctrines delivered by those that rule over them; and that implicit obedience ought to be paid to whatever commands they give. And not much less has been insisted on, by several eminent men of the church of England: although it is true, that the generality of Protestants are apt to run to the other extreme; allowing their pastors no authority at all; but making them both the creatures and the servants of their congregations. And very many there are of our own church who agree with them herein: supposing the pastors to be altogether dependant upon the people; who, in their judgment, have a right to direct, as well as to choose their ministers.

2. But is it not possible to find a medium between these two extremes? Is there any necessity for us to run, either into one or into the other? If we set human laws out of the question, and simply attend to the oracles of God, we may certainly discover a middle path in this important matter. In order thereto, let us carefully examine the words of the apostle above recited. Let us consider,

I. Who are the persons mentioned in the text: they "that rule over" us?

II. Who are they whom the apostle directs to obey and submit themselves to them?

III. What is the meaning of this direction? In what sense are they to "obey and submit themselves?"—I shall then endeavour to make a suitable application of the whole.

I. 1. Consider we, first, Who are the persons mentioned in the text: "They that have the rule over you?" I do not conceive that the words of the apostle are properly translated; because this translation makes the sentence little better than tautology. If they "rule over you," you are certainly ruled by them; so that according to this translation, you are only enjoined to do what you do already: to obey those whom you do obey. Now there is another meaning of the Greek word, which seems

abundantly more proper: it means to *guide*, as well as to rule. And thus, it seems, it should be taken here. The direction, then, when applied to our spiritual guides, is plain and pertinent.

2. This interpretation seems to be confirmed by the seventh verse, which fixes the meaning of this. "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God." The apostle here shows, by the latter clause of the sentence, whom he meant in the former. Those that were "over them," were the same persons "who spoke unto them the word of God:" that is, they were their pastors; those who guided and fed this part of the flock of Christ.

3. But by whom are these guides to be appointed? And what are they supposed to do, in order to be entitled to the obedience which is here prescribed?

Volumes upon volumes have been wrote on that knotty question, *By whom are guides of souls to be appointed?* I do not intend here, to enter at all into the dispute concerning church government; neither to debate, whether it be advantageous or prejudicial to the interest of true religion, that the church and state should be blended together, as they have been ever since the time of Constantine, in every part of the Roman empire, where Christianity has been received. Waving all these points, (which may find employment enough for men that abound in leisure,) by "them that guide you," I mean them that do it, if not by your choice, at least by your consent; them that you willingly accept of to be your guides in the way to heaven.

4. But what are they supposed to do, in order to entitle them to the obedience here prescribed?

They are supposed to go before the flock, (as is the manner of the eastern shepherds to this day,) and to guide them in all the ways of truth and holiness: they are to "nourish them with the words of eternal life;" to feed them with the "pure milk of the word:" applying it continually "for doctrine;" teaching them all the essential doctrines contained therein;—"for reproof;" warning them if they turn aside from the way, to the right hand or to the left;—"for correction;" showing them how to amend what is amiss, and guiding them back into the way of peace;—and "for instruction in righteousness;" training them up to outward holiness, "until they come to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

5. They are supposed to "watch over your souls, as those that shall give account." "As those that shall give account!" How unspeakably solemn and awful are those words! May God write them upon the heart of every guide of souls!

"They watch," waking while others sleep, over the flock of Christ over the souls that he has bought with a price; that he has purchased with his own blood. They have them in their hearts both by day and by night; regarding neither sleep nor food in comparison of them. Even while they sleep, their heart is waking, full of concern for their beloved children. "They watch," with deep earnestness, with uninterrupted seriousness, with unwearied care, patience, and diligence, as they that are about to give an account of every particular soul, to him that standeth at the door,—to the Judge of quick and dead.

II. 1. We are, secondly, To consider who those are whom the apostle directs to obey them that have the rule over them? And in order to

determine this, with certainty and clearness, we shall not appeal to human institutions, but simply (as in answering the preceding question) appeal to that decision of it which we find in the oracles of God. Indeed we have hardly occasion to go one step farther than the text itself. Only it may be proper, first, to remove out of the way some popular opinions, which have been almost every where taken for granted, but can in no wise be proved.

2. It is usually supposed, first, That the apostle is here directing parishioners to obey and submit themselves to the minister of their parish. But can any one bring the least shadow of proof for this from the Holy Scriptures? Where is it written, that we are bound to obey any minister, because we live in what is called his parish? "Yes," you say, "we are bound to obey every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake." True, in all things indifferent; but this is not so: it is exceeding far from it. It is far from being a thing indifferent to *me*, who is the guide of my soul. I dare not receive one as my guide to heaven, that is himself in the high road to hell. I dare not take a wolf for my shepherd, that has not so much as sheep's clothing; that is, a common swearer, an open drunkard, a notorious sabbath breaker. And such (the more is the shame, and the more the pity) are many parochial ministers at this day.

3. "But are you not properly members of that congregation to which your parents belong?" I do not apprehend that I am: I know no scripture that obliges me to this. I owe all deference to the commands of my parents, and willingly obey them in all things lawful. But it is not lawful to call them Rabbi; that is, to believe or obey them implicitly. Every one must give an account of himself to God. Therefore every man must judge for himself: especially in a point of so deep importance as this is,—the choice of a guide for his soul.

4. But we may bring this matter to a short issue, by recurring to the very words of the text. They that have voluntarily connected themselves with such a pastor, as answers the description given therein; such as do, in fact, "watch over their souls, as they that shall give account;" such as do "nourish them up with the words of eternal life;" such as feed them as with the "pure milk of the word," and constantly apply it to them "for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness;"—all who have found and chosen guides of this character, of this spirit and behaviour, are undoubtedly required by the apostle, to "obey and submit themselves" to them.

III. 1. But what is the meaning of this direction? This remains to be considered. In what sense, and how far, does the apostle direct them to "obey and submit" to their spiritual guides?

If we attend to the proper sense of the two words here used by the apostle, we may observe, that the former of them, πειθεσθε, (from πειθω, *to persuade*,) refers to the understanding; the latter, υπειχετε, to the will and outward behaviour. To begin with the former. What influence ought our spiritual guides to have over our understanding? We dare no more call our spiritual fathers, Rabbi, than the "fathers of our flesh." We dare no more yield implicit faith to the former than to the latter. In this sense, "one is our Master," (or rather Teacher,) "who is in heaven." But whatever submission, of even our understanding, is short of this, we may, nay, we ought, to yield to them.

2. To explain this a little farther. St. James uses a word which is nearly allied to the former of these: "The wisdom of which is from above is, ευπειθης, *easy to be convinced*, or to be persuaded." Now if we ought to have, and to show this wisdom towards all men, we ought to have it in a more eminent degree, and to show it upon every occasion, towards those that "watch over our souls." With regard to these, above all other men, we should be "easy to be entreated:" easily convinced of any truth, and easily persuaded to any thing that is not sinful.

3. A word of nearly the same import with this, is frequently used by St. Paul; namely, επιεικης. In our translation, it is more than once rendered *gentle*. But perhaps it might be more properly rendered, (if the word may be allowed,) *yielding:* ready to *yield*, to give up our own will, in every thing that is not a point of duty. This amiable temper every real Christian enjoys, and shows in his intercourse with all men. But he shows it in a peculiar manner towards those that watch over his soul. He is not only willing to receive any instruction from them; to be convinced of any thing which he did not know before; to lie open to their advice, and glad to receive admonition, or reproof; but is ready to give up his own will, whenever he can do it with a clear conscience. Whatever they desire him to do, he does; if it be not forbidden in the word of God. Whatever they desire him to refrain from, he does so; if it be not enjoined in the word of God. This is implied in those words of the apostle: "Submit yourselves to them:" yield to them: give up your own will. This is meet, and right, and your bounden duty, if they do indeed watch over your souls, as they that shall give account. If you do thus "obey and submit yourselves" to them, they will give an account of you "with joy, not with groaning;" as they must otherwise do: for although they should be clear of your blood, yet "that would be unprofitable to you;" yea, a prelude to eternal damnation

4. How acceptable to God was an instance of obedience, somewhat similar to this! You have a large and particular account of it in the thirty-fifth chapter of Jeremiah. "The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, saying, Go to the house of the Rechabites, and give them wine to drink. Then I took the whole house of the Rechabites; [all the heads of their families;] and set before them pots full of wine, and said unto them, drink ye wine. But they said, we will drink no wine: for Jonadab [a great man in the reign of Jehu] the son of Rechab [from whom we are named, being the father of our family] commanded us, ye shall drink no wine, neither ye nor your sons for ever. And we have obeyed the voice of Jonadab our father, in all that he charged us." We do not know any particular reason why Jonadab gave this charge to his posterity. But as it was not sinful, they gave this strong instance of gratitude to their great benefactor. And how pleasing this was to the Father of their spirits, we learn from the words that follow: "And Jeremiah said unto the Rechabites, because ye have obeyed the voice of Jonadab, your father, therefore, thus saith the Lord of hosts, Jonadab shall not want a man to stand before my face for ever."

5. Now it is certain, Christians owe full as much gratitude and obedience to those that watch over their souls, as ever the house of the Rechabites owed to Jonadab the son of Rechab. And we cannot doubt, but he is as well pleased with our obedience to these, as ever he was with their obedience to Jonadab. If he was so well pleased with the

gratitude and obedience of this people to their temporal benefactor, have we not all reason to believe, he is full as well pleased with the gratitude and obedience of Christians to those who derive far greater blessings to them, than ever Jonadab conveyed to his posterity?

6. It may be of use yet again to consider, in what instances it is the duty of Christians to obey and submit themselves to those that watch over their souls. Now the things which they enjoin, must be either enjoined of God, or forbidden by him, or indifferent. In things forbidden of God, we dare not obey them; for we are to obey God rather than man. In things enjoined of God, we do not properly obey *them*, but our common Father. Therefore, if we are to obey them at all, it must be in things indifferent. The sum is, it is the duty of every private Christian, to obey his spiritual Pastor, by either doing or leaving undone any thing of an indifferent nature; any thing that is in no way determined in the word of God.

7. But how little is this understood in the Protestant world! At least in England and Ireland. Who is there, even among those that are supposed to be good Christians, who dreams there is such a duty as this? And yet there is not a more express command, either in the Old or New Testament. No words can be more clear and plain; no command more direct and positive. Therefore, certainly none who receive the Scripture as the word of God, can live in the habitual breach of this, and plead innocence. Such an instance of wilful, or at least careless disobedience, must grieve th Holy Spirit of God. It cannot but hinder the grace of God from having its full effect upon the heart. It is not improbable, that this very disobedience may be one cause of the deadness of many souls; one reason of their not receiving those blessings which they seek with some degree of sincerity.

8. It remains only to make a short application of what has now been delivered.

You that read this, do you apply it to yourself? Do you examine yourself thereby? Do not *you* stop your own growth in grace, if not by wilful disobedience to this command; yet by careless inattention to it; by not considering it as the importance of it deserves? If so, you defraud yourself of many blessings which you might enjoy. Or, are you of a better mind; of a more excellent spirit? Is it your fixed resolution, and your constant endeavour, "to obey them that have the rule over you in the Lord?" To submit yourself as cheerfully to your spiritual, as to your natural parents? Do you ask, "Wherein should I submit to them?" The answer has been given already: not in things enjoined of God; not in things forbidden by him; but in things indifferent: in all that are not determined, one way or the other, by the oracles of God. It is true, this cannot be done, in some instances, without a considerable degree of self denial, when they advise you to refrain from something that is agreeable to flesh and blood. And it cannot be obeyed in other instances, without taking up your cross; without suffering some pain or inconvenience, that is not agreeable to flesh and blood. For that solemn declaration of our Lord has place here, as well as on a thousand other occasions: "Except a man deny himself, and take up his cross daily, he cannot be my disciple." But this will not affright you, if you resolve to be not only almost, but altogether a Christian: if you determine to fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life

9. I would now apply myself in a more particular manner to *you* who desire *me* to watch over your souls. Do *you* make it a point of conscience, to obey me for my Master's sake? To submit yourselves to *me* in things indifferent; things not determined in the word of God? In all things that are not enjoined, nor yet forbidden in Scripture? Are you "easy to be entreated," as by men in general, so by me in particular? Easy to be convinced of any truth, however contrary to your former prejudices?—And easy to be persuaded to do or forbear any indifferent thing at *my* desire? You cannot but see, that all this is clearly contained in the very words of the text. And you cannot but acknowledge, that it is highly reasonable for you so to do, if I do employ all my time, all my substance, all my strength, both of body and soul, not in seeking my own honour or pleasure, but in promoting your present and eternal salvation; if I do indeed "watch over your souls as one that must give account."

10. Do you then take my advice (I ask in the presence of God and all the world) with regard to *dress?* I published that advice above thirty years ago; I have repeated it a thousand times since. I have advised you not to be comformable to the world herein: to lay aside all needless ornaments; to avoid all expense; to be patterns of plainness to all that are round about you. Have you taken this advice? Have you all, men and women, young and old, rich and poor, laid aside all those needless ornaments, which I particularly objected to? Are you all exemplarily plain in your apparel? As plain as Quakers, (so called,) or Moravians? If not, if you are still dressed like the generality of people of your own rank and fortune, you declare hereby, to all the world, that you will not obey them that are over you in the Lord. You declare, in open defiance of God and man, that you will not *submit yourselves* to them. Many of you carry your sins on your forehead, openly, and in the face of the sun. You harden your hearts against instruction and against conviction: you harden one another: especially those of you that were once convinced, and have now stifled your convictions. You encourage one another to stop your ears against the truth, and shut your eyes against the light: lest haply you should see, that you are fighting against God, and against your own souls. If I were now called to give an account of you, it would be "with groans, and not with joy." And sure that would be "unprofitable for you:" the loss would fall upon your own head.

11. I speak all this on supposition, (though that is a supposition not to be made,) that the Bible was silent on this head; that the Scriptures said nothing concerning *dress*, and left it to every one's own discretion. But if all other texts were silent, this is enough: "Submit yourselves to them that are over you in the Lord." I bind this upon your consciences, in the sight of God. Were it only in obedience to this direction, you cannot be clear before God, unless you throw aside all needless ornaments, in utter defiance of that tyrant of fools, *fashion:* unless you seek only to be adorned with good works, as men and women professing godliness.

12. Perhaps, you will say, "this is only a little thing: it is a mere trifle." I answer, if it be, you are the more inexcusable before God and man. What! will you disobey a plain command of God, for *a mere trifle?* God forbid! Is it a trifle to sin against God?—To set

his authority at nought? Is this a little thing? Nay, remember, there can be no little sin, till we can find a little god! Meantime, be assured of one thing: the more conscientiously you obey your spiritual guides, the more powerfully will God apply the word, which they speak in his name to your heart! The more plentifully will he water what is spoken, with the dew of his blessing; and the more proofs will you have, it is not only they that speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaketh in them.

SERMON CIII.—*On Visiting the Sick.*

"I was sick, and ye visited me," Matt. xxv, 36.

1. IT is generally supposed, that the means of grace, and the ordinances of God, are equivalent terms. We commonly mean by that expression, those that are usually termed, works of piety; *viz.* hearing and reading the Scripture, receiving the Lord's supper, public and private prayer, and fasting. And it is certain, these are the ordinary channels which convey the grace of God to the souls of men. But are they the only means of grace? Are there no other means than these, whereby God is pleased, frequently, yea, ordinarily, to convey his grace to them that either love or fear him? Surely there are works of mercy, as well as works of piety, which are real means of grace. They are more especially such to those that perform them with a single eye. And those that neglect them, do not receive the grace which otherwise they might. Yea, and they lose, by a continual neglect, the grace which they had received. Is it not hence, that many who were once strong in faith, are now weak and feeble minded? And yet they are not sensible whence that weakness comes, as they neglect none of the ordinances of God. But they might see whence it comes, were they seriously to consider St. Paul's account of all true believers; "We are his workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before prepared, that we might walk therein," Eph. ii, 10.

2. The walking herein is essentially necessary, as to the continuance of that faith whereby we are already saved by grace, so to the attainment of everlasting salvation. Of this we cannot doubt, if we seriously consider, that these are the very words of the great Judge himself: "Come, ye blessed children of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and ye gave me meat: thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me," Matt. xxv, 34, &c. "Verily, I say unto you, in as much as ye have done it to the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." If this do not convince you that the continuance in works of mercy is necessary to salvation, consider what the Judge of all says to those on the left hand: "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat: thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick and in prison, and ye visited me not. In as much as ye have not done it unto one of the least of these, neither have ye

done it unto me." You see, were it for this alone, they must "depart" from God, "into everlasting punishment."

3. Is it not strange that this important truth should be so little understood, or at least should so little influence the practice of them that fear God? Suppose this representation be true, suppose the Judge of all the earth speaks right, those, and those only, that feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, relieve the stranger, visit those that are in prison, according to their power and opportunity, shall "inherit the everlasting kingdom." And those that do not, shall "depart into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

4. I purpose at present, to confine my discourse to one article of these: visiting the sick: a plain duty, which all that are in health may practise, in a higher or lower degree; and which, nevertheless, is almost universally neglected, even by those that profess to love God. And touching this I would inquire,

I. What is implied in visiting the sick?

II. How is it to be performed?—And,

III. By whom?

I. First, I would inquire, what is the nature of this duty? What is implied in "visiting the sick?"

1. By the sick, I do not mean only those that keep their bed, or that are sick in the strictest sense. Rather I would include all such as are in a state of affliction, whether of mind or body; and that, whether they are good or bad, whether they fear God or not.

2. "But is there need of visiting them in person? May we not relieve them at a distance? Does it not answer the same purpose, if we send them help, as if we carry it ourselves?" Many are so circumstanced, that they cannot attend the sick in person; and where this is the real case, it is, undoubtedly, sufficient for them to send help, being the only expedient they can use. But this is not properly visiting the sick; it is another thing. The word which we render *visit*, in its literal acceptation, means, to *look upon*. And this, you well know, cannot be done, unless you are present with them. To send them assistance is, therefore, entirely a different thing from visiting them. The former then ought to be done, but the latter not left undone.

"But I send a physician to those that are sick: and he can do them more good than I can." He can in one respect: he can do them more good with regard to their bodily health. But he cannot do them more good with regard to their souls, which are of infinitely greater importance. And if he could, this would not excuse *you:* his going would not fulfil *your* duty. Neither would it do the same good to *you*, unless you saw them with your own eyes. If you do not, you lose a means of grace: you lose an excellent means of increasing your thankfulness to God, who saves you from this pain and sickness, and continues your health and strength; as well as of increasing your sympathy with the afflicted, your benevolence, and all social affections.

3. One great reason why the rich in general have so little sympathy for the poor, is, because they so seldom visit them. Hence it is, that, according to the common observation, one part of the world does not know what the other suffers. Many of them do not know, because they do not care to know: they keep out of the way of knowing it; and then plead their voluntary ignorance, as an excuse for their hardness of heart.

"Indeed, sir," (said a person of large substance,) "I am a very compassionate man. But to tell you the truth, I do not know any body in the world that is in want." How did this come to pass? Why, he took good care to keep out of their way. And if he fell upon any of them unawares, "he passed over on the other side."

4. How contrary to this are both the spirit and behaviour of even people of the highest rank in a neighbouring nation! In Paris, ladies of the first quality, yea, princesses of the blood, of the royal family, constantly visit the sick, particularly the patients in the grand hospital. And they not only take care to relieve their wants, (if they need any thing more than is provided for them,) but attend on their sick beds, dress their sores, and perform the meanest offices for them. Here is a pattern for the English, poor or rich, mean or honourable! For many years we have abundantly copied after the follies of the French. Let us for once copy after their wisdom and virtue, worthy the imitation of the whole Christian world. Let not the gentlewomen, or even the countesses, in England, be ashamed to imitate those princesses of the blood! Here is a fashion that does honour to human nature. It began in France; but God forbid it should end there!

5. And if your delicacy will not permit you to imitate those truly honourable ladies; by abasing yourselves in the manner which they do, by performing the lowest offices for the sick; you may, however, without humbling yourselves so far, supply them with whatever they want. And you may administer help of a more excellent kind, by supplying their spiritual wants: instructing them (if they need such instruction) in the first principles of religion: endeavouring to show them the dangerous state they are in, under the wrath and curse of God through sin, and pointing them to the "Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world." Beside this general instruction, you might have abundant opportunities of comforting those that are in pain of body, or distress of mind: you might find opportunities of strengthening the feeble minded, quickening those that are faint and weary; and of building up those that have believed, and encouraging them to "go on to perfection." But these things you must do in your own person: you see, they cannot be done by proxy. Or suppose you could give the same relief to the sick by another, you could not reap the same advantage to yourself. You could not gain that increase in lowliness, in patience, in tenderness of spirit, in sympathy with the afflicted, which you might have gained, if you had assisted them in person. Neither would you receive the same recompense in the resurrection of the just, when "every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour."

II. 1. I proceed to inquire in the second place, How are we to visit them? In what manner may this labour of love be most effectually performed? How may we do this most to the glory of God, and to the benefit of our neighbour? But before ever you enter upon the work, you should be deeply convinced, that you are by no means sufficient for it: you have neither sufficient grace, nor sufficient understanding, to perform it in the most excellent manner. And this will convince you of the necessity of applying to the Strong for strength; and of flying to the Father of lights, the Giver of every good gift, for wisdom; ever remembering, "There is a Spirit in man that giveth wisdom, and the inspiration of the Holy One that giveth understanding." Whenever therefore you

are about to enter upon the work, seek his help by earnest prayer. Cry to him for the whole spirit of humility, lest if pride steal into your heart, if you ascribe any thing to yourself, while you strive to save others, you destroy your own soul. Before and through the work, from the beginning to the end, let your heart wait upon him for a continual supply of meekness and gentleness, of patience and long suffering, that you may never be angry or discouraged, at whatever treatment, rough or smooth, kind or unkind, you may meet with. Be not moved with the deep ignorance of some, the dulness, the amazing stupidity of others: marvel not at their peevishness or stubbornness; at their non-improvement after all the pains that you have taken; yea, at some of them turning back to perdition, and being worse than they were before. Still your record is with the Lord, and your reward with the Most High.

2. As to the particular method of treating the sick; you need not tie yourself down to any; but may continually vary your manner of proceeding, as various circumstances may require. But it may not be amiss, usually, to begin with inquiring into their outward condition. You may ask, Whether they have the necessaries of life? Whether they have sufficient food and raiment? If the weather be cold, Whether they have fuel? Whether they have needful attendance? Whether they have proper advice, with regard to their bodily disorder? especially if it be of a dangerous kind. In several of these respects you may be able to give them some assistance yourself: and you may move those that are more able than you, to supply your lack of service. You might properly say in your own case, "To beg I am ashamed:" but never be ashamed to beg for the poor: yea, in this case, be an importunate beggar: do not easily take a denial. Use all the address, all the understanding, all the influence you have: at the same time trusting in Him that has the hearts of all men in his hands.

3. You will then easily discern, whether there is any good office, which you can do for them with your hands. Indeed most of the things which are needful to be done, those about them can do better than you. But in some you may have more skill, or more experience than them. And if you have, let not delicacy or honour stand in your way. Remember his word, "In as much as ye have done it unto the least of these, ye have done it unto me." And think nothing too mean to do for Him. Rejoice to be abased for his sake.

4. These little labours of love will pave your way to things of greater importance. Having shown that you have a regard for their bodies, you may proceed to inquire concerning their souls. And here you have a large field before you: you have scope for exercising all the talents which God has given you. May you not begin with asking, Have you ever considered that God governs the world?—that his providence is over all?—and over *you* in particular?—Does any thing then befal you without his knowledge?—or without his designing it for your good? He knows all you suffer: he knows all your pains: he sees all your wants. He sees not only your affliction in general, but every particular circumstance of it. Is he not looking down from heaven, and disposing all these things for your profit? You may then inquire, Whether he is acquainted with the general principles of religion? And afterwards, lovingly and gently examine, Whether his life has been agreeable thereto? Whether he has been an outward, barefaced sinner, or

has had a form of religion? See next, whether he knows any thing of the power? Of worshipping God "in spirit and in truth?" If he does not, endeavour to explain to him, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord;" and, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." When he begins to understand the nature of holiness, and the necessity of the new birth, then you may press upon him "repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ."

5. When you find any of them begin to fear God, it will be proper to give them one after another, some plain tracts, as the "Instructions for Christians;" "Awake, thou that Sleepest;" and the "Nature and Design of Christianity." At the next visit you may inquire, What they have read?—what they remember?—and what they understand? And then will be the time to enforce what they understand, and, if possible, impress it on their hearts. Be sure to conclude every meeting with prayer. If you cannot yet pray without a form, you may use some of those composed by Mr. Spinckes, or any other pious writer. But the sooner you break through this backwardness the better. Ask of God, and he will open your mouth.

6. Together with the more important lessons which you endeavour to teach all the poor whom you visit, it would be a deed of charity to teach them two things more, which they are generally little acquainted with: industry and cleanliness. It was said by a pious man, "Cleanliness is next to godliness." Indeed the want of it is a scandal to all religion; causing the way of truth to be evil spoken of. And without industry, we are neither fit for this world, nor for the world to come. With regard to both, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

III. 1. The third point to be considered is, By whom is this duty to be performed? The answer is ready: By all that desire to "inherit the kingdom" of their Father, which was "prepared for them from the foundation of the world." For thus saith the Lord, "Come, ye blessed;—inherit the kingdom;—for I was sick, and ye visited me." And to those on the left hand, "Depart, ye cursed;—for I was sick, and ye visited me not." Does not this plainly imply, that as all who do this are "blessed," and shall "inherit the kingdom;" so all who do it not are "cursed," and shall "depart into everlasting fire?"

2. All, therefore, who desire to escape everlasting fire, and to inherit the everlasting kingdom, are equally concerned, according to their power, to practise this important duty. It is equally incumbent on young and old, rich and poor, men and women, according to their ability. None are so young, if they desire to save their own souls, as to be excused from assisting their neighbours. None are so poor, (unless they want the necessaries of life,) but they are called to do something more or less, at whatever time they can spare, for the relief and comfort of their afflicted fellow sufferers.

3. But those "who are rich in this world," who have more than the conveniences of life, are peculiarly called of God to this blessed work, and pointed out to it by his gracious providence. As you are not under a necessity of working for your bread, you have your time at your own disposal. You may, therefore, allot some part of it every day for this labour of love. If it be practicable, it is far best to have a fixed hour, (for *any time*, we say, *is no time*,) and not to employ that time in any

other business, without urgent necessity. You have likewise a peculiar advantage over many, by your station in life. Being superior in rank to them, you have the more influence on that very account. Your inferiors, of course, look up to you with a kind of reverence. And the condescension which you show in visiting them, gives them a prejudice in your favour, which inclines them to hear you with attention, and willingly receive what you say. Improve this prejudice to the uttermost for the benefit of their souls, as well as their bodies. While you are eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame, a husband to the widow, and a father to the fatherless, see that you still keep a higher end in view, even the saving of souls from death, and that you labour to make all you say and do subservient to that great end.

4. "But have the poor themselves any part or lot in this matter? Are they any way concerned in visiting the sick? What can they give to others, who have hardly the conveniences, or perhaps necessaries of life for themselves?" If they have not, yet they need not be wholly excluded from the blessing which attends the practice of this duty. Even those may remember that excellent rule, "Let our conveniences give way to our neighbour's necessities; and our necessities give way to our neighbour's extremities." And few are so poor, as not to be able sometimes to give "two mites:" but if they are not, if they have no money to give, may they not give what is of more value? Yea, of more value than thousands of gold and silver? If you speak "in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth," may not the words you speak be health to the soul, and marrow to the bones? Can you give them nothing? Nay, in administering to them the grace of God, you give them more than all this world is worth. Go on, go on, thou poor disciple of a poor Master! Do as he did in the days of his flesh! Whenever thou hast an opportunity, go about doing good, and healing all that are oppressed of the devil; encouraging them to shake off his chains, and fly immediately to Him

> "Who sets the prisoners free, and breaks
> The iron bondage from their necks."

Above all, give them your prayers. Pray with them; pray for them, and who knows but you may save their souls alive?

5. You that are *old*, whose feet are ready to stumble upon the dark mountains, may not you do a little more good before you go hence and are no more seen? Oh remember,

> "'Tis time to live, if you grow old:
> Of little life the best to make,
> And manage wisely the last stake!"

As you have lived many years, it may be hoped you have attained such knowledge as may be of use to others. You have certainly more knowledge of men, which is commonly learned by dear bought experience. With what strength you have left, employ the few moments you have to spare, in ministering to those who are weaker than yourselves. Your grey hairs will not fail to give you authority, and add weight to what you speak. You may frequently urge, to increase their attention,

> "Believe me, youth; for I am read in cares,
> And groan beneath the weight of more than three score years."

You have frequently been a sufferer yourself; perhaps you are so still So much the more give them all the assistance you can, both with regard to their souls and bodies, before they and you go to the place whence you will not return.

6. On the other hand, you that are *young* have several advantages that are almost peculiar to yourselves. You have generally a flow of spirits, and a liveliness of temper, which, by the grace of God, make you willing to undertake, and capable of performing, many good works, at which others would be discouraged. And you have your health and strength of body, whereby you are eminently qualified to assist the sick and those that have no strength. You are able to take up and carry the crosses which may be expected to lie in the way. Employ then your whole vigour of body and mind, in ministering to your afflicted brethren. And bless God that you have them to employ in so honourable a service; like those heavenly "servants of his that do his pleasure," by continually ministering to the heirs of salvation.

7. "But may not *women*, as well as men, bear a part in this honourable service?" Undoubtedly they may: nay, they ought: it is meet, right, and their bounden duty. Herein there is no difference: "there is neither male nor female in Christ Jesus." Indeed it has long passed for a maxim with many, that "women are only to be seen; not heard." And accordingly many of them are brought up in such a manner, as if they were only designed for agreeable playthings! But is this doing honour to the sex? Or is it a real kindness to them? No; it is the deepest unkindness: it is horrid cruelty: it is mere Turkish barbarity. And I know not how any woman of sense and spirit can submit to it. Let all you that have it in your power assert the right, which the God of nature has given you. Yield not to that vile bondage any longer! You, as well as men, are rational creatures. You, like them, were made in the image of God; you are equally candidates for immortality; you too are called of God, as you have time, to "do good unto all men." Be "not disobedient to the heavenly calling." Whenever you have opportunity, do all the good you can, particularly to your poor sick neighbour. And every one of *you* likewise, "shall receive *your* own reward according to *your* own labour."

8. It is well known, that in the primitive church, there were women particularly appointed for this work. Indeed there was one or more such in every Christian congregation under heaven. They were then termed deaconesses, that is, servants: servants of the church, and of its great Master. Such was Phebe, mentioned by St. Paul, Rom. xvi, 1, "a deaconess of the church of Cenchrea." It is true, most of these were women in years, and well experienced in the work of God. But were the young wholly excluded from that service? No: neither need they be, provided they know in whom they have believed; and show that they are holy of heart, by being holy in all manner of conversation. Such a deaconess, if she answered her picture, was Mr. Law's Miranda. Would any one object to her visiting and relieving the sick and poor, because she was a woman? Nay, and a young one too? Do any of you that are young desire to tread in her steps? Have you a pleasing form? An agreeable address? So much the better, if you are wholly devoted to God. He will use these, if your eye be single, to make your words strike the deeper. And while you minister to others, how many bless-

ings may redound into your own bosom! Hereby your natural levity may be destroyed; your fondness for trifles cured; your wrong tempers corrected; your evil habits weakened, until they are rooted out. And you will be prepared to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, in every future scene of life; only be very wary, if you visit or converse with those of the other sex, lest your affections be entangled, on one side or the other, and so you find a curse instead of a blessing.

9. Seeing then this is a duty to which we are called, rich and poor, young and old, male and female; (and it would be well if parents would train up their children herein, as well as in saying their prayers and going to church;) let the time past suffice, that almost all of us have neglected it, as by general consent. Oh what need has every one of us to say, "Lord, forgive me my sins of omission!" Well, in the name of God, let us now from this day set about it with general consent. And I pray, let it never go out of your mind, that this is a duty which you cannot perform by proxy; unless in one only case:—unless you are disabled by your own pain or weakness. In that only case, it suffices to send the relief which you would otherwise give. Begin, my dear brethren, begin now, else the impression which you now feel will wear off; and, possibly, it may never return! What then will be the consequence? Instead of hearing that word, "Come, ye blessed;—For I was sick, and ye visited me;" you must hear that awful sentence "Depart ye cursed!—For I was sick, and ye visited me not!"

Sermon CIV.—*The Reward of the Righteous.*

Preached before the Humane Society.

"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," Matt. xxv, 34.

1. Reason alone will convince every fair inquirer, that God "is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." This alone teaches him to say, "Doubtless there is a reward for the righteous:" "there is a God that judgeth the earth." But how little information do we receive from unassisted reason, touching the particulars contained in this general truth! As eye hath not seen, or ear heard, so neither could it naturally enter into our hearts to conceive the circumstances of that awful day, wherein God will judge the world. No information of this kind could be given, but from the great Judge himself. And what an amazing instance of condescension it is, that the Creator, the Governor, the Lord, the Judge of all, should deign to give us so clear and particular an account of that solemn transaction! If the learned heathen acknowledged the sublimity of that account which Moses gives of the creation, what would he have said, if he had heard this account of the Son of man coming in his glory? Here, indeed, is no laboured pomp of words, no ornaments of language. This would not have suited either the speaker or the occasion. But what inexpressible dignity of thought! see him "coming in the clouds of heaven; and all the angels with him!" See him "sitting on the throne of his glory, and all the nations gathered before him!" And shall he separate them, placing the good on his right

hand, and the wicked on his left? "Then shall the King say."—With what admirable propriety is the expression varied! "The Son of man" comes down to judge the children of men. "The King" distributes rewards and punishments to his obedient or rebellious subjects. "Then shall the King say to them on his right hand, come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

2. "Prepared for you from the foundation of the world:"—But does this agree with the common supposition, that God created man merely to supply the vacant thrones of the rebel angels? Does it not rather seem to imply, that he would have created man, though the angels had never fallen? Inasmuch as he then prepared the kingdom for his human children, when he laid the foundation of the earth.

3. "Inherit the kingdom:"—as being "heirs of God, and joint heirs" with his beloved Son. It is your right; seeing I have purchased "eternal redemption for all them that obey me:" and ye did obey me in the days of your flesh. Ye "believed in the Father, and also in me." Ye loved the Lord your God; and that love constrained you to love all mankind. Ye continued in the faith that wrought by love. Ye showed your faith by your works. "For I was hungry, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and in prison, and ye came unto me."

4. But in what sense are we to understand the words that follow? "Lord, when saw we thee hungry, and gave thee meat? Or thirsty, and gave thee drink?" They cannot be literally understood: they cannot answer in these very words; because it is not possible they should be ignorant, that God had really wrought by them. Is it not then manifest, that these words are to be taken in a figurative sense? And can they imply any more, than that all which they have done will appear as nothing to them; will, as it were, vanish away, in view of what God their Saviour had done and suffered for them?

5. But "the King shall answer and say unto them, verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me." What a declaration is this! Worthy to be had in everlasting remembrance. May the finger of the living God write it upon all our hearts!

I would take occasion from hence, first, To make a few reflections on good works in general: secondly, To consider in particular that institution, for the promotion of which we are now assembled: and, in the third place, to make a short application.

I. 1. And first, I would make a few reflections upon good works in general.

I am not insensible, that many, even serious people, are jealous of all that is spoken upon this subject: nay, and whenever the necessity of good works is strongly insisted on, take for granted that he who speaks in this manner, is but one remove from popery. But should we, for fear of this or of any other reproach, refrain from speaking "the truth as it is in Jesus?" Should we, on any consideration, "shun to declare the whole counsel of God?" Nay, if a false prophet could utter that solemn word, how much more may the ministers of Christ; "We can not go beyond the word of the Lord, to speak either more or less!"

2. Is it not to be lamented, that any who fear God should desire us to do otherwise? And that by speaking otherwise themselves, they should occasion the way of truth to be evil spoken of? I mean, in particular, the way of salvation by faith; which, on this very account, is despised, nay, had in abomination by many sensible men. It is now above forty years since this grand scriptural doctrine, "by grace ye are saved through faith," began to be openly declared, by a few clergymen of the church of England. And not long after, some who heard, but did not understand, attempted to preach the same doctrine; but miserably mangled it; wresting the Scripture, and "making void the law through faith."

3. Some of these, in order to exalt the value of faith, have utterly depreciated good works. They speak of them as not only not necessary to salvation, but as greatly obstructive to it. They represent them as abundantly more dangerous than evil ones, to those who are seeking to save their souls. One cries aloud, "more people go to hell by praying than by thieving." Another screams out, "away with your works! Have done with your works, or you cannot come to Christ!" And this unscriptural, irrational, heathenish declamation, is called, *preaching the gospel!*

4. But "shall not the Judge of all the earth" speak, as well as "do right?" Will not "he be justified in his saying, and clear when he is judged?" Assuredly he will. And upon his authority we must continue to declare, that whenever you do good to any for his sake; when you feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty; when you assist the stranger, or clothe the naked; when you visit them that are sick or in prison; these are not *splendid sins*, as one marvellously calls them, but "sacrifices wherewith God is well pleased."

5. Not that our Lord intended, we should confine our beneficence to the bodies of men. He undoubtedly designed that we should be equally abundant in works of spiritual mercy. He died "to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of *all* good works:" zealous above all, to "save souls from death," and thereby "hide a multitude of sins." And this is unquestionably included in St. Paul's exhortation; "As we have time, let us do good unto all men:" good in every possible kind, as well as in every possible degree. But why does not our blessed Lord mention works of spiritual mercy? He could not do it with any propriety. It was not for him to say, "I was in error, and ye convinced me; I was in sin, and ye brought me back to God." And it needed not; for in mentioning *some* he included *all* works of mercy.

6. But may I not add one thing more? (only he that heareth, let him understand:) good works are so far from being hinderances of our salvation; they are so far from being insignificant, from being of no account in Christianity, that supposing them to spring from a right principle, they are the perfection of religion. They are the highest part of that spiritual building, whereof Jesus Christ is the foundation. To those, who attentively consider the thirteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, it will be undeniably plain that what St. Paul there describes as the highest of all Christian graces, is properly and directly the love of our neighbour. And to him who attentively considers the whole tenor both of the Old and New Testament, it will be equally plain, that works springing from this love are the highest part of the religion therein revealed. Of these our Lord himself says, "Hereby is my Fa-

ther glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit." Much *fruit!* Does not the very expression imply the excellency of what is so termed? Is not the tree itself for the sake of the fruit? By bearing fruit, and by this alone, it attains the highest perfection it is capable of, and answers the end for which it was planted. Who, what is he then, that is called a Christian, and can speak lightly of good works?

II. 1. From these general reflections, I proceed to consider that institution in particular, for the promotion of which we are now assembled. And in doing this, I shall, first, observe the rise of this institution: secondly, the success: and, thirdly, the excellency of it: after which you will give me leave to make a short application.

I. On the first head, the rise of this institution, I may be very brief, as a great part of you know it already.

1. One would wonder (as an ingenious writer observes) that such an institution as this, of so deep importance to mankind, should appear so late in the world. Have we any thing wrote upon the subject, earlier than the tract published at Rome, in the year 1637? And did not the proposal then sleep for many years? Were there any more than one or two attempts, and those not effectually pursued, till the year 1700? By what steps it has been since revived and carried into execution, we are now to inquire.

2. I cannot give you a clearer view of this, than by presenting you with a short extract from the introduction to the "Plan and Reports of the Society," published two years ago.

"Many and indubitable are the instances of the possibility of restoring to life persons apparently struck with sudden death, whether by an apoplexy, convulsive fits, noxious vapours, strangling or drowning. Cases of this nature have occurred in every country. But they were considered and *neglected*, as extraordinary phenomena, from which no salutary consequence could be drawn.

3. "At length, a few benevolent gentlemen in Holland conjectured, that some at least might have been saved, had proper means been used in time; and formed themselves into a society, in order to make a trial. Their attempts succeeded far beyond their expectations. Many were restored who must otherwise have perished. And they were, at length enabled to extend their plan over the seven provinces.

"Their success instigated other countries to follow their example. In the year 1768, the magistrates of health, at Milan and Venice, issued orders for the treatment of drowned persons. The city of Hamburgh appointed a similar ordinance to be read in all the churches. In the year 1769, the empress of Germany published an edict extending its directions and encouragements to every case that afforded a possibility of relief. In the year 1771, the magistrates of Paris founded an institution in favour of the drowned.

4. "In the year 1773, Dr. Cogan translated the memoirs of the society at Amsterdam, in order to inform our countrymen of the practicability of recovering persons apparently drowned: and Mr. Hawes uniting with him, these gentlemen proposed a plan for a similar institution in these kingdoms. They were soon enabled to form a society for this excellent purpose. The plan is this:

"I. The society will publish, in the most extensive manner possible the proper methods of treating persons in such circumstances.

"II. They will distribute a premium of two guineas among the first persons who attempt to recover any one taken out of the water as dead And this reward will be given, even if the attempt is unsuccessful, provided it has been pursued two hours, according to the method laid down by the society.

"III. They will distribute a premium of four guineas, where the person is restored to life.

"IV. They will give one guinea to any that admits the body into his house without delay, and furnishes the necessary accommodations.

"V. A number of medical gentlemen living near the places where these disasters commonly happen, will give their assistance gratis."

II. Such was the rise of this admirable institution. With what success has it been attended, is the point which I purpose, in the next place, very briefly to consider.

And it must be allowed to be, not only far greater than those who despised it had imagined, but greater than the most sanguine expectations of the gentlemen who were immediately engaged in it.

In the short space, from its first establishment in May 1774, to the end of December, eight persons, seemingly dead, were restored to life.

In the year 1775, forty-seven were restored to life: thirty-two of them by the direct encouragement and assistance of the gentlemen of this society; and the rest, by medical gentlemen and others, in consequence of their method of treatment being generally known.

In the year 1776, forty-one persons were restored to life, by the assistance of this society. And eleven cases of those who had been restored elsewhere, were communicated to them.

So the number of lives preserved and restored, in two years and a half, since their first institution, amounts to one hundred and seven! Add to these, those that have been since restored, and out of two hundred and eighty-four persons, who were dead, to all appearance, no less than a hundred and fifty-seven have been restored to life! Such is the *success*, which has attended them in so short a time. Such a blessing has the gracious providence of God given to this infant undertaking.

III. 1. It remains only to show the excellency of it. And this may appear from one single consideration: This institution unites together in one, all the various acts of mercy. The several works of charity mentioned above are all contained in this. It comprises all corporeal (if I may so speak) and all spiritual benefits; all the instances of kindness which can be shown either to the bodies or souls of men. To show this beyond all contradiction, there needs no studied eloquence, no rhetorical colouring, but simply and nakedly to relate the thing as it is.

2. The thing attempted, and not only attempted, but actually performed, (so has the goodness of God prospered the labours of these lovers of mankind!) is no less, in a qualified sense, than restoring life to the dead. Is it any wonder then, that the generality of men should at first ridicule such an undertaking? That they should imagine the persons, who aimed at any such thing, must be utterly out of their senses? Indeed one of old said, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" Cannot he, who bestowed life at first, just as well bestow it again? But it may well be thought a thing incredible, that *man* should raise the dead. For no human power can create life. And what human power can restore

it? Accordingly, when our Lord (whom the Jews at that time supposed to be a mere man) came to the house of Jairus, in order to raise his daughter from the dead, upon the first intimation of his design, "they laughed him to scorn." "The maid (said he) is not dead but sleepeth." "This is rather to be called sleep than death; seeing her life is not at an end; but I will quickly awaken her out of this sleep."

3. However, it is certain she was really dead, and so beyond all power but that of the Almighty. But see what power God has now given to man! To his name be all the praise! See with what wisdom he has endued these sons of mercy! Teaching them to stop the parting soul, to arrest the spirit just quitting the breathless clay, and taking wing for eternity! Who hath seen such a thing? Who hath heard such things? Who hath read them in the annals of antiquity? Sons of men, "can these dry bones live?" Can this motionless heart beat again? Can this clotted blood flow any more? Can these dry, stiff vessels, open to give it passage? Can this cold flesh resume its native warmth, or those eyes again see the sun? Surely these are such things, (might one not almost say, such miracles?) as neither we of the present generation, nor our fathers had known!

4. Consider, I entreat you, how many miracles of mercy (so to speak) are contained in one! That poor man, who was lately numbered with the dead, by the care and pains of these messengers of God, again breathes the vital air, opens his eyes, and stands up upon his feet. He is restored to his rejoicing family, to his wife, to his (late) helpless children, that he may again, by his honest labour, provide them with all the necessaries of life. See now what ye have done, ye ministers of mercy! Behold the fruit of your labour of love! Ye have been a husband to the widow, a father to the fatherless. And hereby ye have given meat to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, clothes to the naked. For hungry, thirsty, and naked, these little ones must have been, had not you restored him that prevents it. You have more than relieved, you have prevented that sickness, which might naturally have arisen from their want of sufficient food to eat, or raiment to put on. You have hindered those orphans from wandering up and down, not having a place where to lay their head. Nay, and very possibly you have prevented some of them from being lodged in a dreary comfortless prison.

5. So great, so comprehensive is the mercy, which you have shown to the bodies of your fellow creatures! But why should their souls be left out of the account? How great are the benefits you have conferred on these also! The husband has now again an opportunity of assisting his wife, in things of the greatest moment. He may now again strengthen her hands in God, and help her to run with patience the race that is set before her. He may again join with her in instructing their children, and training them up in the way wherein they should go: who may live to be a comfort to their aged parents, and useful members of the community.

6. Nay, it may be you have snatched the poor man himself, not only from the jaws of death, but from sinking lower than the waters, from the jaws of everlasting destruction. It cannot be doubted, but some of those whose lives you have restored, although they had been before without God in the world, will remember themselves, and not only with their lips but in their lives, show forth his praise. It is highly probable

some of these (as *one* out of the *ten lepers*) "will return and give thanks to God," real, lasting thanks, by devoting themselves to his honourable service.

7. It is remarkable, that several of those whom you have brought back from the margin of the grave, were intoxicated at the very time when they dropped into the water. And at that very instant, (which is frequently the case,) they totally lost their senses. Here therefore was no place for, no possibility of repentance. They had not time, they had not sense, so much as to cry out, "Lord have mercy!" So they were sinking through the mighty waters into the pit of destruction! And these instruments of divine mercy plucked them at once out of the water, and out of the fire! By the same act, delivered them from temporal and from eternal death!

8. Nay, one poor sinner (let it never be forgotten!) was just coming down from the ship, when (overtaken by the justice and mercy of God) her foot slipped, and she fell into the river. Instantly her senses were lost, so that she could not call upon God. Yet he had not forgotten her. He sent those who delivered her from death; at least, from the death of the body. And who knows, but she may lay it to heart, and turn from the error of her ways? Who knows, but she may be saved from the second death, and, with her deliverers, "inherit the kingdom?"

9. One point more deserves to be particularly remarked. Many of those, who have been restored to life, (no less than eleven out of the fourteen, that were saved in a few months,) were in the number of those that are a reproach to our nation, wilful self murderers. As many of the desperate men, who attempt this horrid crime, are men who have had a liberal education, it is a pity but they would consider those fine words, not of a poor, narrow souled Christian, but of a generous heathen, nay, a Roman! Let them calmly consider that beautiful passage:

> "Proxima deinde tenent mœsti loca, qui sibi letum
> Insontes peperêre manu, lucemque perosi
> Projecêre animas. Quam vellent æthere in alto
> Nunc et pauperiem, et duros perferre labores!
> Fata obstant, tristique palus inamabilis undâ
> Alligat, et novies Styx interfusa coercet."*

"Fata obstant!" But in favour of many, we see God has overruled fate. They are brought back, over the unnavigable river. They do behold the upper skies. They see the light of the sun. Oh let them see the light of Thy countenance! And let them so live their few remaining days on earth, that they may live with thee for ever!

IV. 1. Permit me now to make a short application.

But to whom shall I direct this? Are there any here who are unhappily prejudiced against that revelation, which breathes nothing but benevolence? Which contains the richest display of God's love to man, that ever was made from the foundation of the world? Yet even to *you*

* "Then crowds succeed, who, prodigal of breath,
Themselves anticipate the doom of death;
Though free from guilt, they cast their lives away,
And sad and sullen hate the golden day.
Oh with what joy the wretches now would bear
Pain, toil, and wo, to breathe the vital air!
In vain! By fate for ever they are bound
With dire Avernus, and the lake profound,
And Styx, with nine wide channels, roars around!" PITT'S Virg

I would address a few words; for if you are not Christians, you are men. You too are susceptible of kind impressions: you have the feelings of humanity. Has not your heart too glowed at that noble sentiment; (worthy the heart and the lips of the highest Christian;)

"Homo sum: humani nihil a me alienum puto!"

Have not you also sympathized with the afflicted? How many times have you been pained at human misery? When you have beheld a scene of deep distress, has not your soul melted within you?

"And now and then a sigh you stole,
And tears began to flow."

But is it easy for any one to conceive a scene of deeper distress than this? Suppose you are standing by, just when the messenger comes in, and the message is delivered. "I am sorry to tell you, but you must know it, your husband is no more. He was making haste out of the vessel, and his foot slipped. It is true, after a time, his body was found; but there it lies, without any signs of life." In what a condition are now both the mother and the children! Perhaps, for a while, stupid, overwhelmed, silent; staring at each other; then bursting out into loud and bitter lamentation! Now is the time to help them; by assisting those who make it their business so to do. Now let nothing hinder you from improving the glorious opportunity! Restore the husband to his disconsolate wife, the father to his weeping children! It is true, you cannot do this in person: you cannot be upon the spot. But you may do it in an effectual manner, by assisting those that are. You may now, by your generous contribution, *send* them the help which you cannot personally give. Oh shut not up your bowels of compassion towards them! Now open your hearts and your hands. If you have much, give plenteously; if not, give a little, with a willing mind.

2. To you, who believe the Christian revelation, I may speak in a still stronger manner. You believe, your blessed Master "left you an example, that you might tread in his steps." Now you know, his whole life was one labour of love. You know "how he went about doing good," and that without intermission; declaring to all, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." Is not that, then, the language of your heart;

"Thy mind throughout my life be shown,
While list'ning to the wretches' cry,
The widows' and the orphans' groan,
On mercy's wings I swiftly fly,
The poor and helpless to relieve;
My life, my all, for them to give!"

Occasions of doing this can never be wanting; for "the poor ye have always with you." But what a peculiar opportunity does the solemnity of this day furnish you with, of "treading in his steps," after a manner which you did not before conceive? Did he say to the poor afflicted parent, (doubtless to the surprise of many,) "Weep not?" And did he surprise them still more, when he stopped her flowing tears, by restoring life to her dead son, and "delivering him to his mother?" Did he (notwithstanding all that "laughed him to scorn") restore to life the daughter of Jairus? How many things of a nearly resembling sort, "if human we may liken to divine," have been done, and continue to be done daily, by these lovers of mankind? Let every one then be ambi-

tious of having a share in this glorious work! Let every man (in a stronger sense than Mr. Herbert meant)

"Join hands with God, to make a poor man live!"

By your generous assistance, be ye partakers of their work, and partakers of their joy.

3. To you I need add but one word more. Remember (what was spoken at first) the solemn declaration of Him, whose ye are, and whom ye serve, coming in the clouds of heaven! While you are promoting this comprehensive charity, which contains feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, lodging the stranger; indeed all good works in one, let those animating words be written on your hearts, and sounding in your ears; "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto ME."

SERMON CV.—*On Pleasing all Men.*

"Let every man please his neighbour for his good to edification," Rom. xv, 2.

1. UNDOUBTEDLY the duty here prescribed is incumbent on all mankind; at least, on every one of those to whom are entrusted the oracles of God: for it is here enjoined to every one without exception, that names the name of Christ. And the person whom every one is commanded to please, is *his neighbour;* that is, every child of man. Only we are to remember here, what the same apostle speaks upon a similar occasion; "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." In like manner, we are to please all men, if it be possible, as much as lieth in us: but strictly speaking, it is not possible: it is what no man ever did, nor ever will perform. But suppose we use our utmost diligence, be the event as it may, we fulfil our duty.

2. We may farther observe in how admirable a manner the apostle limits this direction; otherwise, were it pursued without any limitation, it might produce the most mischievous consequences. We are directed to please them, *for their good;* not barely for the sake of pleasing them, or pleasing ourselves; much less of pleasing them to their hurt; which is so frequently done, indeed continually done, by those who do not love their neighbour as themselves. Nor is it only their temporal good, which we are to aim at in pleasing our neighbour; but what is of infinitely greater consequence: we are to do it *for their edification.* In such a manner as may conduce to their spiritual and eternal good. We are so to please them, that the pleasure may not perish in the using, but may redound to their lasting advantage; may make them wiser and better, holier and happier, both in time and in eternity.

3. Many are the treatises and discourses which have been published on this important subject. But all of them that I have either seen or heard, were miserably defective. Hardly one of them proposed the right end: one and all had some lower design in pleasing men, than to save their souls,—to build them up in love and holiness. Of consequence, they were not likely to propose the right means, for the attainment of that end. One celebrated tract of this kind, entitled, "The Courtier," was published in Spain, about two hundred years ago, and translated into various languages. But it has nothing to do with edi

fication, and is therefore quite wide of the mark. Another treatise, entitled, "The Complete Courtier," was published in our own country, in the reign of king Charles the second; and, as it seems, by a retainer to his court. In this there are several very sensible advices concerning our outward behaviour; and many little improprieties in word or action are observed, whereby men displease others without intending it: but this author, likewise, has no view at all to the spiritual or eternal good of his neighbour. Seventy or eighty years ago, another book was printed in London, entitled, "The Art of Pleasing." But as it was wrote in a languid manner, and contained only common, trite observations, it was not likely to be of use to men of understanding, and still less to men of piety.

4. But it may be asked, has not the subject been since treated of by a writer of a very different character? Is it not exhausted, by one who was himself a consummate master of the art of pleasing? And who, writing to one he tenderly loved, to a favourite son, gives him all the advices which his great understanding, improved by various learning, and the experience of many years, and much converse with all sorts of men, could suggest? I mean, the late Lord Chesterfield; the general darling of all the Irish, as well as of the English nation.

5. The means of pleasing, which this wise and indulgent parent continually and earnestly recommends to his darling child, and on which he, doubtless, formed both his tempers and outward conduct,—

"Till death untimely stopp'd his tuneful tongue,"—

were, first, *making love*, in the grossest sense, to all the married women whom he conveniently could: (single women he advises him to refrain from, for fear of disagreeable consequences:) secondly, constant and careful *dissimulation:* always wearing a mask: trusting no man upon earth, so as to let him know his real thoughts; but perpetually seeming to mean what he did not mean, and seeming to be what he was not: thirdly, well devised *lying* to all sorts of people: speaking what was farthest from his heart: and, in particular, *flattering* men, women, and children, as the infallible way of pleasing them.

It needs no great art to show, that this is not the way to please our neighbour *for his good*, or *to edification*. I shall endeavour to show, that there is a better way of doing it; and indeed a way diametrically opposite to this. It consists,

I. In removing hinderances out of the way; and,

II. In using the means that directly tend to this end.

I. 1. I advise all that desire to "please their neighbour for his good to edification," first, to remove all hinderances out of the way; or, in other words, to avoid every thing which tends to displease wise and good men, men of sound understanding and real piety. Now cruelty, malice, envy, hatred, and revenge, are displeasing to all wise and good men; to all who are endued with a sound understanding and genuine piety. There is likewise another temper, nearly related to these, only in a lower kind, and which is usually found in common life, wherewith men in general are not pleased: we commonly call it *ill nature*. With all possible care avoid all these: nay, and whatever bears any resemblance to them;—as sourness, sternness, sullenness, on the one hand; peevishness and fretfulness on the other;—if ever you hope to "please your neighbour for his good to edification."

2. Next to cruelty, malice, and similar tempers, with the words and actions that naturally spring therefrom, nothing is more disgustful, not only to persons of sense and religion, but even to the generality of men, than pride, haughtiness of spirit, and its genuine fruits, an *assuming*, *arrogant*, *overbearing* behaviour. Even uncommon learning, joined with shining talents, will not make amends for this: but a man of eminent endowments, if he be eminently haughty, will be despised by many, and disliked by all. Of this the famous master of Trinity college in Cambridge was a remarkable instance. How few persons of his time had a stronger understanding, or deeper learning, than Dr. Bentley! And yet how few were less beloved! unless one who was little, if at all inferior to him in sense or learning, and equally distant from humility: the author of the "divine legation of Moses." Whoever, therefore, desires to please his neighbour for his good, must take care of splitting upon this rock. Otherwise the same pride which impels him to seek the esteem of his neighbour, will infallibly hinder his attaining it.

3. Almost as disgustful to the generality of men as haughtiness itself, is a passionate temper and behaviour. Men of a tender disposition are afraid even to converse with persons of this spirit. And others are not fond of their acquaintance; as frequently, (perhaps when they expected nothing less,) meeting with shocks, which if they bear for the present, yet they do not willingly put themselves in the way of meeting with again. Hence passionate men have seldom many friends; at least, not for any length of time. Crowds, indeed, may attend them for a season, especially when it may promote their interest. But they are usually disgusted one after another, and fall off like leaves in autumn. If, therefore, you desire lastingly to please your neighbour for his good, by all possible means avoid violent passion.

4. Yea, and if you desire to please, even on this account, take that advice of the apostle: "Put away all lying." It is the remark of an ingenious author, that of all vices, *lying* never yet found an apologist; any that would openly plead in its favour, whatever his private sentiments might be. But it should be remembered, Mr. Addison went to a better world, before lord Chesterfield's letters were published. Perhaps his apology for it was the best that ever was, or can be made for so bad a cause. But after all, the labour he has bestowed upon it, "has only semblance of worth; not substance." It has no solidity in it; it is nothing better than a shining phantom. And as lying can never be commendable or innocent, so neither can it be pleasing: at least, when it is stripped of its disguise, and appears in its own shape. Consequently it ought to be carefully avoided, by all those who wish to please their neighbour for his good to edification.

5. But is not flattery, a man may say, one species of lying? And has not this been allowed in all ages, to be the sure means of pleasing? Has not that observation been confirmed by numberless experiments;

Obsequium amicos, veritas odium parit?
"Flattery creates friends, plain dealing enemies?"

Has not a late witty writer, in his "Sentimental Journal," related some striking instances of this? I answer, it is true: flattery is pleasing for a while, and that not only to weak minds; as the desire of praise, whether deserved or undeserved, is planted in every child of man. But it is pleasing only for a while. As soon as the mask drops off, as soon as it

appears that the speaker meant nothing by his soft words we are pleased no longer. Every man's own experience teaches him this. And we all know that if a man continues to flatter, after his insincerity is discovered, it is disgustful, not agreeable. Therefore, even this fashionable way of lying, is to be avoided, by all that are desirous of pleasing their neighbour to his lasting advantage.

6. Nay, whoever desires to do this, must remember, that not only lying, in every species of it, but even dissimulation, (which is not the same with lying, though nearly related to it,) is displeasing to men of understanding, though they have not religion. Terence represents even an old heathen, when it was imputed to him, as answering with indignation; "*Simulare non est meum:*" "Dissimulation is no part of my character." Guile, subtlety, cunning, the whole art of deceiving, by whatever terms it is expressed, is not accounted an accomplishment by wise men; but is, indeed, an abomination to them. And even those who practise it most, who are the greatest artificers of fraud, are not pleased with it in other men, neither are fond of conversing with those that practise it on themselves. Yea, the greatest deceivers are greatly displeased at those that play their own arts back upon them.

II. Now if cruelty, malice, envy, hatred, revenge, ill nature; if pride and haughtiness; if irrational anger; if lying and dissimulation, together with guile, subtlety, and cunning; are all and every one displeasing to all men, especially to wise and good men; we may easily gather from hence, what is the sure way to please them for their good to edification. Only we are to remember, that there are those in every time and place, whom we must not expect to please. We must not, therefore, be surprised, when we meet with men who are not to be pleased any way. It is now, as it was of old when our Lord himself complained, "Whereunto shall I liken the men of this generation? They are like unto children sitting in the market place, and saying to each other, we have piped unto you, but ye have not danced: we have mourned unto you, but ye have not wept." But leaving these froward ones to themselves, we may reasonably hope to please others, by a careful and steady observation of the few directions following.

1. First, Let *love* not visit you as a transient guest, but be the constant temper of your soul. See that your heart be filled at all times, and on all occasions, with real, undissembled benevolence; not to those only that love *you*, but to every soul of man. Let it pant in your heart; let it sparkle in your eyes; let it shine on all your actions. Whenever you open your lips, let it be with love; and let there be in your tongue the law of kindness. Your word will then distil as the rain, and as the dew upon the tender herb. Be not straitened or limited in your affection, but let it embrace every child of man. Every one that is born of a woman has a claim to your good will. You owe this not to some, but to all. And let all men know, that you desire both their temporal and eternal happiness, as sincerely as you do your own.

2. Secondly, If you would please your neighbour for his good, study to be *lowly* in heart. Be little and vile in your own eyes, in honour preferring others before yourself. Be deeply sensible of your own weaknesses, follies, and imperfections; as well as of the sin remaining in your heart, and cleaving to all your words and actions. And let this spirit appear in all you speak or do. "Be clothed with humility."

Reject with horror that favourite maxim of the old heathen, sprung from the bottomless pit; *Tanti eris aliis, quanti tibi fueris:* "The more you value yourself, the more others will value you." Not so; on the contrary, both God and man "resist the proud:" and as "God giveth grace to the humble;" so humility, not pride, recommends us to the esteem and favour of men, especially those that fear God.

3. If you desire to please your neighbour for his good to edification, you should, thirdly, labour and pray, that you may be *meek*, as well as lowly in heart. Labour to be of a calm, dispassionate temper; gentle towards all men. And let the gentleness of your disposition appear in the whole tenor of your conversation. Let all your words and all your actions be regulated thereby. Remember, likewise, that advice of St. Peter: as an addition to your gentleness, "Be merciful;" be courteous. be pitiful; be tenderly compassionate to all that are in distress; to all that are under any affliction of mind, body, or estate. Let

> "The various scenes of human wo,
> Excite our softest sympathy."

Weep with them that weep. If you can do no more, at least mix your tears with theirs; and give them healing words, such as may calm their minds, and mitigate their sorrows. But if you can, if you are able to give them actual assistance, let it not be wanting. Be as eyes to the blind, as feet to the lame; a husband to the widow, and a father to the fatherless. This will greatly tend to conciliate the affection, and to give a profitable pleasure, not only to those who are immediate objects of your compassion; but to others likewise, that "see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

4. And while you are pitiful to the afflicted, see that you are *courteous* towards all men. It matters not, in this respect, whether they are high or low, rich or poor, superior or inferior to you. No, nor even whether good or bad, whether they fear God or not. Indeed the *mode* of showing your courtesy may vary, as Christian prudence will direct: but the thing itself is due to all: the lowest and worst have a claim to our courtesy. It may either be inward or outward; either a temper or a mode of behaviour. Such a mode of behaviour as naturally springs from courtesy of heart. Is this the same with good breeding, or politeness? (which seems to be only a high degree of good breeding:) nay, good breeding is chiefly the fruit of education; but education cannot give courtesy of heart. Mr. Addison's well known definition of politeness, seems rather to be a definition of this: "A constant desire of pleasing all men, appearing through the whole conversation." Now this may subsist even in a high degree, where there has been no advantage of education. I have seen as real courtesy in an Irish cabin, as could be found in St. James's, or the Louvre.

5. Shall we endeavour to go a little deeper to search the foundation of this matter? What is the source of that desire to please, which we term courtesy? Let us look attentively into our heart, and we shall soon find an answer. The same apostle that teaches us to *be courteous*, teaches us to *honour all men:* and his Master teaches me to love all men. Join these together, and what will be the effect? A poor wretch cries to me for an alms: I look, and see him covered with dirt and rags. But through these I see one that has an immortal spirit, made to know, and love and dwell with God to eternity. I honour him for

his Creator's sake. I see, through all these rags, that he is purpled over with the blood of Christ. I love him for the sake of his Redeemer. The courtesy, therefore, which I feel and show towards him, is a mixture of the honour and love, which I bear to the offspring of God; the purchase of his Son's blood, and the candidate for immortality. This courtesy let us feel and show towards all men; and we shall please all men to their edification.

6. Once more. Take all opportunities of *declaring* to others the *affection* which you really feel for them. This may be done with such an air, and in such a manner, as is not liable to the imputation of flattery: and experience shows, that honest men are pleased by this, full as much as knaves are by flattery. Those who are persuaded that your expressions of good will towards them are the language of your heart, will be as well satisfied with them, as with the strongest encomiums which you could pass upon them. You may judge them by yourselves, by what you feel in your own breast. You like to be honoured: but had you not rather be beloved?

7. Permit me to add one advice more. If you would please all men for their good, at all events speak to all men the very truth from your heart. When you speak, open the window of your breast: let your words be the very picture of your heart. In all companies, and on all occasions, be a man of veracity: nay, be not content with bare veracity; but "in simplicity and godly sincerity, have all your conversation in the world;" as "an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile."

8. To sum up all in one word: if you would please men, please God! Let truth and love possess your whole soul. Let them be the springs of all your affections, passions, tempers; the rule of all your thoughts. Let them inspire all your discourse; continually seasoned with that salt, and "meet to minister grace to the hearers." Let all your actions be wrought in love. Never "let mercy or truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck." Let them be open and conspicuous to all; and "write them on the table of thy heart:" "So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man."

SERMON CVI.—*The Duty of Constant Communion.*

THE following discourse was written above five and fifty years ago, for the use of my pupils at Oxford. I have added very little, but retrenched much; as I then used more words than I do now. But I thank God, I have not yet seen cause to alter my sentiments in any point which is therein delivered. J. W

1788.

"Do this in remembrance of me," Luke xxii, 19.

IT is no wonder that men who have no fear of God, should never think of doing this. But it is strange that it should be neglected by any that do fear God, and desire to save their souls: and yet nothing is more common. One reason why many neglect it is, they are so much afraid of "eating and drinking unworthily," that they never think how much greater the danger is, when they do not eat or drink at all. That I may do what I can to bring these well meaning men to a more just way of thinking, I shall,

I. Show that it is the duty of every Christian to receive the Lord's supper as often as he can: and,

II. Answer some objections.

I. I am to show that it is the duty of every Christian to receive the Lord's supper as often as he can.

1. The first reason why it is the duty of every Christian so to do, is, because it is a plain command of Christ. That this is his command, appears from the words of the text: "Do this in remembrance of me:" by which, as the apostles were obliged to bless, break, and give the bread to all that joined with them in these holy things; so were all Christians obliged to receive those signs of Christ's body and blood. Here, therefore, the bread and wine are commanded to be received, in remembrance of his death, to the end of the world. Observe too, that this command was given by our Lord, when he was just laying down his life for our sakes. They are, therefore, as it were, his dying words to all his followers.

2. A second reason why every Christian should do this, as often as he can is, because the benefits of doing it are so great, to all that do it in obedience to him: viz. the forgiveness of our past sins, the present strengthening and refreshing of our souls. In this world we are never free from temptations. Whatever way of life we are in, whatever our condition be, whether we are sick or well, in trouble or at ease, the enemies of our souls are watching to lead us into sin. And too often they prevail over us. Now, when we are convinced of having sinned against God, what surer way have we of procuring pardon from him, than the "showing forth the Lord's death," and beseeching him, for the sake of his Son's sufferings, to blot out all our sins?

3. The grace of God given herein confirms to us the pardon of our sins, and enables us to leave them. As our bodies are strengthened by bread and wine, so are our souls by these tokens of the body and the blood of Christ. This is the food of our souls: this gives strength to perform our duty and leads us on to perfection. If, therefore, we have any regard for the plain command of Christ, if we desire the pardon of our sins, if we wish for strength to believe, to love and obey God, then we should neglect no opportunity of receiving the Lord's supper; then we must never turn our backs on the feast which our Lord has prepared for us. We must neglect no occasion, which the good providence of God affords us, for this purpose. This is the true rule: so often are we to receive as God gives us opportunity. Whoever, therefore, does not receive, but goes from the holy table when all things are prepared, either does not understand his duty, or does not care for the dying command of his Saviour, the forgiveness of his sins, the strengthening of his soul, and the refreshing it with the hope of glory.

4. Let every one, therefore, who has either any desire to please God, or any love of his own soul, obey God, and consult the good of his own soul, by communicating every time he can; like the first Christians, with whom the Christian sacrifice was a constant part of the Lord's day's service. And for several centuries they received it almost every day: four times a week always, and every saint's day beside. Accordingly, those that joined in the prayers of the faithful, never failed to partake of the blessed sacrament. What opinion they had of any who turned his back upon it, we may learn from that ancient canon: "If

any believer join in the prayers of the faithful, and go away without receiving the Lord's supper, let him be excommunicated, as bringing confusion into the church of God."

5. In order to understand the nature of the Lord's supper, it would be useful carefully to read over those passages in the gospel, and in the first epistle to the Corinthians, which speak of the institution of it Hence we learn that the design of this sacrament is the continual remembrance of the death of Christ, by eating bread and drinking wine, which are the outward signs of the inward grace, the body and blood of Christ.

6. It is highly expedient for those who purpose to receive this, whenever their time will permit, to prepare themselves for this solemn ordinance, by self examination and prayer. But this is not absolutely necessary. And when we have not time for it, we should see that we have the habitual preparation, which is absolutely necessary; and can never be dispensed with on any account, or any occasion whatever. This is, first, a full *purpose* of heart to keep all the commandments of God: and, secondly, a sincere *desire* to receive all his promises.

II. I am, in the second place, to answer the common objections against constantly receiving the Lord's supper.

1. I say, *constantly* receiving: for as to the phrase of *frequent* communion, it is absurd to the last degree. If it means any thing else than constant, it means more than can be proved to be the duty of any man. For if we are not obliged to communicate constantly, by what argument can it be proved, that we are obliged to communicate frequently? Yea, more than once a year? or once in seven years? or once before we die? Every argument brought for this, either proves that we ought to do it constantly, or proves nothing at all. Therefore, that indeterminate, unmeaning way of speaking, ought to be laid aside by all men of understanding.

2. In order to prove that it is our duty to communicate constantly, we may observe that the holy communion is to be considered either, 1. As a command of God: or 2. As a mercy to man.

First, as a command of God. God our mediator and governor, from whom we have received our life and all things, on whose will it depends, whether we shall be perfectly happy or perfectly miserable from this moment to eternity; declares to us that all who obey his commands, shall be eternally happy; all who do not shall be eternally miserable. Now one of these commands is, "Do this in remembrance of me." I ask then, why do you not do this, when you can do it if you will? When you have an opportunity before you, why do not you obey the command of God?

3. Perhaps you will say, "God does not command me to do this *as often as I can:*" that is, the words "as often as you can," are not added in this particular place. What then? Are we not to obey every command of God, as often as we can? Are not all the promises of God made to those, and those only, who "give all diligence;" that is, to those who do all they can to obey his commandments? Our power is the one rule of our duty. Whatever we can do, that we ought. With respect either to this or any other command, he that, when he may obey it if he will, does not, will have no place in the kingdom of heaven.

4. And this great truth, that we are obliged to keep every command

as far as we can, is clearly proved from the absurdity of the contrary opinion: for were we to allow that we are not obliged to obey every commandment of God as often as we can, we have no argument left to prove that any man is bound to obey any command at any time. For instance: should I ask a man, why he does not obey one of the plainest commands of God? why, for instance, he does not help his parents? He might answer, "I will not do it now; but I will at another time." When that time comes, put him in mind of God's command again; and he will say, "I will obey it some time or other." Nor is it possible ever to prove, that he ought to do it now, unless by proving that he ought to do it as often as he can; and therefore he ought to do it now because he can if he will.

5. Consider the Lord's supper, secondly, as a mercy from God to man. As God, whose mercy is over all his works, and particularly over the children of men, knew there was but one way for man to be happy like himself; namely, by being like him in holiness; as he knew we could do nothing towards this of ourselves, he has given us certain means of obtaining his help. One of these is the Lord's supper, which, of his infinite mercy, he hath given for this very end; that through this means we may be assisted to attain those blessings which he hath prepared for us; that we may obtain holiness on earth, and everlasting glory in heaven.

I ask, then, why do you not accept of his mercy as often as ever you can? God now offers you his blessing: why do you refuse it? You have now an opportunity of receiving the mercy why do you not receive it? You are weak: why do not you seize every opportunity of increasing your strength? In a word, considering this as a command of God, he that does not communicate as often as he can, has no piety; considering it as a mercy, he that does not communicate as often as he can, has no wisdom.

6. These two considerations will yield a full answer to all the common objections which have been made against constant communion; indeed to all that ever were or can be made. In truth, nothing can be objected against it, but upon supposition, that this particular time, either the communion would be no mercy, or I am not commanded to receive it. Nay, should we grant it would be no mercy, that is not enough; for still the other reason would hold: whether it does you any good or none, you are to obey the command of God.

7. However, let us see the particular excuses which men commonly make for not obeying it. The most common is, "I am unworthy; and 'he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself.' Therefore I dare not communicate, lest I should eat and drink my own damnation."

The case is this: God offers you one of the greatest mercies on this side heaven, and commands you to accept it. Why do not you accept this mercy, in obedience to his command? You say, "I am unworthy to receive it." And what then? You are unworthy to receive any mercy from God. But is that a reason for refusing all mercy? God offers you a pardon for all your sins. You are unworthy of it, it is sure, and he knows it: but since he is pleased to offer it nevertheless, will not you accept of it? He offers to deliver your soul from death: you are unworthy to live: but will you therefore refuse life? He offers to endue your soul with new strength: because you are unworthy of it

will you deny to take it? What can God himself do for us farther, if we refuse his mercy, because we are unworthy of it?

8. But suppose this were no mercy to us; (to suppose which is indeed giving God the lie; saying that is not good for man, which he purposely ordered for his good;) still I ask, why do not you obey God's command? He says, "Do this." Why do you not? You answer, "I am unworthy to do it." What! unworthy to obey God? Unworthy to do what God bids you do? Unworthy to obey God's command? What do you mean by this? That those who are unworthy to obey God, ought not to obey him? Who told you so? If he were even "an angel from heaven, let him be accursed." If you think, God himself has told you by St. Paul; let us hear his words. They are these: "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself."

Why this is quite another thing. Here is not a word said of being unworthy to eat and drink. Indeed he does speak of eating and drinking unworthily, but that is quite a different thing: so he has told us himself. In this very chapter we are told, that by eating and drinking unworthily, is meant, taking the holy sacrament in such a rude and disorderly way, that one was "hungry, and another drunken." But what is that to *you?* Is there any danger of *your* doing so? Of your eating and drinking *thus unworthily?* However unworthy you are to communicate, there is no fear of your communicating thus. Therefore, whatever the punishment is, of doing it thus unworthily, it does not concern *you.* You have no more reason from this text to disobey God, than if there was no such text in the Bible. If you speak of "eating and drinking unworthily," in the sense St. Paul uses the words; you may as well say, "I dare not communicate, *for fear the church should fall;*" as for fear I should *eat and drink unworthily.*

9. If then you fear bringing *damnation* on yourself by this, you fear where no fear is. Fear it not, for eating and drinking unworthily; for that, in St. Paul's sense, ye cannot do. But I will tell you for what you shall fear damnation: for not eating and drinking at all; for not obeying your Maker and Redeemer; for disobeying his plain command; for thus setting at nought both his mercy and authority. Fear ye this: for hear what his apostle saith: "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all," James ii, 10.

10. We see then how weak the objection is, "I dare not receive,* because I am unworthy." Nor is it any stronger, though the reason why you think yourself unworthy, is, that you have lately fallen into sin. It is true, our church forbids those "who have done any grievous crime," to receive it without repentance. But all that follows from this is, that we should repent before we come; not that we should neglect to come at all.

To say therefore, that "a man may turn his back upon the altar, because he has lately fallen into sin; that he may impose this penance upon himself;" is talking without any warrant from Scripture. For where does the Bible teach, to atone for breaking one commandment of God, by breaking another? What advice is this? "Commit a new act of disobedience, and God will more easily forgive the past!"

11. Others there are, who, to excuse their disobedience, plead, that they are unworthy in another sense: that they "cannot live up to it; they cannot pretend to lead so holy a life, as constantly communicating

* The Lord's supper

would oblige them to do." Put this into plain words. I ask, why do not you accept the mercy which God commands you to accept? You answer, "because I cannot live up to the profession I must make when I receive it." Then it is plain you ought never to receive it at all. For it is no more lawful to promise once what you know you cannot perform, than to promise it a thousand times. You know too, that it is one and the same promise, whether you make it every year or every day. You promise to do just as much, whether you promise ever so often or ever so seldom.

If therefore you cannot live up to the profession they make who communicate once a week, neither can you come up to the profession you make, who communicate once a year. But cannot you indeed? Then it had been good for you that you had never been born. For all that you profess at the Lord's table, you must both profess and keep, or you cannot be saved. For you profess nothing there but this: that you will diligently keep his commandments. And cannot you keep up to this profession? Then you cannot enter into life.

12. Think then what you say, before you say, "you cannot live up to what is required of constant communicants." This is no more than is required of any communicants; yea, of every one that has a soul to be saved. So that to say, "you cannot live up to this," is neither better nor worse than renouncing Christianity. It is, in effect, renouncing your baptism, wherein you solemnly promised to keep all his commandments. You now fly from that profession. You wilfully break one of his commandments, and to excuse yourself, say, you cannot keep his commandments; then you cannot expect to receive the promises, which are made only to those that keep them.

13. What has been said on this pretence against constant communion, is applicable to those who say the same thing in other words: "We dare not do it, because it requires so perfect an obedience afterwards, as we cannot promise to perform." Nay, it requires neither more nor less perfect obedience than you promised in your baptism. You then undertook to keep the commandments of God by his help: and you promise no more when you communicate.

14. A second objection which is often made against constant communion, is, the having so much business, as will not allow time for such a preparation as is necessary thereto. I answer, all the preparation that is absolutely necessary, is contained in those words: "Repent you truly of your sins past; have faith in Christ our Saviour;" (and observe, that word is not taken in its highest sense;) "amend your lives, and be in charity with all men: so shall ye be meet partakers of these holy mysteries." All who are thus prepared, may draw near without fear, and receive the sacrament to their comfort. Now what business can hinder you from being thus prepared? From repenting of your past sins? From believing that Christ died to save sinners? From amending your lives, and being in charity with all men? No business can hinder you from this, unless it be such as hinders you from being in a state of salvation. If you resolve and design to follow Christ, you are fit to approach the Lord's table. If you do not design this, you are only fit for the table and company of devils.

15. No business, therefore, can hinder any man from having that preparation which alone is necessary, unless it be such as unprepares

him for heaven; as puts him out of a state of salvation. Indeed every prudent man will, when he has time, examine himself before he receives the Lord's supper; whether he repents him truly of his former sins, whether he believes the promises of God; whether he fully designs to walk in his ways, and be in charity with all men? In this, and in private prayer, he will doubtless spend all the time he conveniently can. But what is this to you who have not time? What excuse is this, for not obeying God? He commands you to come, and prepare yourself by prayer, if you have time; if you have not, however come. Make not reverence to God's command, a pretence for breaking it. Do not rebel against him, for fear of offending him. Whatever you do, or leave undone, besides, be sure to do what God bids you do. Examining yourself, and using private prayer, especially before the Lord's supper, is good: but, behold! "To obey is better than" self examination; "and to hearken," than the prayer of an angel.

16. A third objection against constant communion is, that it abates our reverence for the sacrament. Suppose it did? What then? Will you thence conclude, that you are not to receive it constantly? This does not follow. God commands you, "Do this." You may do it now, but will not; and to excuse yourself, say, "If I do it so often, it will abate the reverence with which I do it now." Suppose it did: has God ever told you, that when the obeying his command abates your reverence to it, then you may disobey it? If he has, you are guiltless; if not, what you say is just nothing to the purpose. The law is clear. Either show that the Lawgiver makes this exception, or you are guilty before him.

17. Reverence for the sacrament may be of two sorts: either such as is owing purely to the newness of the thing, such as men naturally have for any thing they are not used to; or such as is owing to our faith, or to the love or fear of God. Now the former of these is not properly a religious reverence, but purely natural. And this sort of reverence for the Lord's supper, the constantly receiving of it must lessen. But it will not lessen the true religious reverence, but rather confirm and increase it.

18. A fourth objection is, "I have communicated constantly so long, but I have not found the benefit I expected." This has been the case with many well meaning persons, and therefore deserves to be particularly considered. And consider this first, whatever God commands us to do, we are to do, because he commands; whether we feel any benefit thereby or no. Now God commands, "Do this in remembrance of me." This therefore, we are to do, because he commands; whether we find present benefit thereby or not. But undoubtedly we shall find benefit sooner or later, though perhaps insensibly. We shall be insensibly strengthened, made more fit for the service of God, and more constant in it. At least, we are kept from falling back, and preserved from many sins and temptations: and surely this should be enough to make us receive this food as often as we can; though we do not presently feel the happy effects of it, as some have done, and we ourselves may, when God sees best.

19. But suppose a man has often been at the sacrament, and yet received no benefit. Was it not his own fault? Either he was not rightly prepared, willing to obey all the commands, and to receive all the promises

of God; or he did not receive it aright, trusting in God. Only see that you are duly prepared for it, and the oftener you come to the Lord's table, the greater benefit you will find there.

20. A fifth objection which some have made against constant communion is, "That the church enjoins it only three times a year." The words of the church are; "Note that every parishioner shall communicate at the least three times in the year." To this I answer, first, What if the church had not enjoined it at all; is it not enough that God enjoins it? We obey the church only for God's sake. And shall we not obey God himself? If then you receive three times a year, because the church commands it, receive every time you can, because God commands it. Else your doing the one will be so far from excusing you for not doing the other, that your own practice will prove your folly and sin, and leave you without excuse.

But, secondly, We cannot conclude from these words, that the church excuses him who receives only thrice a year. The plain sense of them is, That he who does not receive thrice at least, shall be cast out of the church: but they by no means excuse him who communicates no oftener. This never was the judgment of our church. on the contrary, she takes all possible care, that the sacrament be duly administered, wherever the Common Prayer is read, every Sunday and holiday in the year.

The church gives a particular direction with regard to those that are in holy orders: "In all cathedral and collegiate churches and colleges, where there are many priests and deacons, they shall all receive the communion with the priest, every Sunday at the least."

21. It has been shown, first, That if we consider the Lord's supper as a command of Christ, no man can have any pretence to Christian piety, who does not receive it (not once a month, but) as often as he can: secondly, That if we consider the institution of it, as a mercy to ourselves, no man who does not receive it as often as he can, has any pretence to Christian prudence: thirdly, That none of the objections usually made, can be any excuse for that man who does not, at every opportunity, obey this command and accept this mercy.

22. It has been particularly shown, first, That unworthiness is no excuse: because though in one sense we are all unworthy; yet none of us need be afraid of being unworthy, in St. Paul's sense of "eating and drinking unworthily:" secondly, That the not having time enough for preparation, can be no excuse: since the only preparation which is absolutely necessary, is that which no business can hinder; nor indeed any thing on earth, unless so far as it hinders our being in a state of salvation: thirdly, That its abating our reverence is no excuse: since he who gave the command, "Do this," no where adds, "unless it abates your reverence:" fourthly, That our not profiting by it is no excuse: since it is our own fault, in neglecting that necessary preparation which is in our own power: lastly, That the judgment of our own church is quite in favour of constant communion. If those who have hitherto neglected it on any of these pretences, will lay these things to heart, they will, by the grace of God, come to a better mind, and never more forsake their own mercies.

Sermon CVII.—*On Former Times.*

"Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? For thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this," Eccl. vii, 10.

1. It is not easy to discern any connection between this text and the context: between these words and either those that go before, or those that follow after. It seems to be a detached, independent sentence, like very many in the Proverbs of Solomon: and, like them, it contains a weighty truth, which deserves a serious consideration. Is not the purport of the question this? It is not wise to inquire into the cause of a supposition, unless the supposition itself be not only true, but clearly proved so to be. Therefore it is not wise to inquire into the cause of this supposition, That "the former days were better than these;" because, common as it is, it was never yet proved, nor indeed ever can be.

2. Perhaps there are few suppositions which have passed more currently in the world than this: That the former days were better than these; and that in several respects. It is generally supposed that we now live in the dregs of time, when the world is, as it were, grown old; and, consequently, that every thing in it is in a declining state. It is supposed, in particular, that men were, some ages ago, of a far taller stature than now; that they likewise had far greater abilities, and enjoyed a deeper and stronger understanding; in consequence of which their writings of every kind are far preferable to those of later times. Above all, it is supposed that the former generations of men excelled the present in virtue; that mankind in every age, and in every nation, have degenerated more and more; so that, at length, they have fallen from the golden into the iron age, and now justice is fled from the earth.

3. Before we consider the truth of these suppositions, let us inquire into the rise of them. And as to the general supposition, that the world was once in a far more excellent state than it is, may we not easily believe, that this arose (as did all the fabulous accounts of the golden age) from some confused traditions concerning our first parents and their paradisiacal state? To this refer many of the fragments of ancient writings, which men of learning have gleaned up. Therefore we may allow, that there is some truth in the supposition; seeing it is certain, the days which Adam and Eve spent in paradise were far better than any which have been spent by their descendants, or ever will be, till Christ returns to reign upon earth.

4. But whence could that supposition arise, that men were formerly of a larger stature than they are now? This has been a generally prevailing opinion almost in all nations and in all ages. Hence, nearly two thousand years ago, the well known line of Virgil:

Qualia nunc hominum producit corpora tellus.

Hence, nearly a thousand years before him, Homer tells us of one of his heroes throwing a stone, which hardly ten men could lift, Οἷοι νῦν βροτοί: *Such as men are now.* We allow, indeed, there have been giants in all ages, in various parts of the world. Whether the antediluvians mentioned in Genesis were such or no, (which many have

questioned,) we cannot doubt that Og the king of Bashan was such, as wel. as Goliath of Gath. Such also were many of the children (or descendants) of Anak. But it does not appear, that in any age or nation men in general were larger than they are now. We are very sure, they were not for many centuries past, by the tombs and coffins that have been discovered, which are exactly of the same size with those that are now in use. And in the catacombs at Rome, the niches for the dead bodies which were hewn in the rock sixteen hundred years ago, are none of them six feet in length, and some a little under. Above all, the pyramids of Egypt (that of king Cheops in particular) have, beyond all reasonable doubt, remained at least three thousand years. Yet none of the mummies (embalmed bodies) brought therefrom, are above five feet ten inches long.

5. But how then came this supposition to prevail so long and so generally in the world? I know not but it may be accounted for from hence: great and little are relative terms; and all men judge of greatness and littleness, by comparing things with themselves. Therefore it is not strange, if we think men are smaller now, than they were when we were children. I remember a remarkable instance of this, in my own case: After having left it seven years, I had a great desire to see the school where I was brought up. When I was there, I wondered that the boys were so much smaller than they used to be when I was at school. "Many of my school fellows, ten years ago, were taller by the head than me; and few of them that are at school now, reach up to my shoulders." Very true: but what was the reason of this? Indeed a very plain one: It was not because they were smaller, but because I was bigger than I was ten years before. I verily believe this is the cause, why men in general suppose the human race do decrease in stature. They remember the time when most of those round about them were both taller and bigger than themselves. Yea, and all men have done the same in their successive generations. Is it any wonder then, that all should have run into the same mistake, when it has been transmitted unawares from father to son, and probably will be to the end of time?

6. But there is likewise a general supposition, that the understanding of man, and all his mental abilities, were of a larger size in the ancient days than they are now; and that the ancient inhabitants of the earth had far greater talents than the present. Men of eminent learning have been of this mind, and have contended for it with the utmost vehemence. It is granted that many of the ancient writers, both philosophers, poets, and historians, will not easily be excelled, if equalled, by those of later ages. We may instance in Homer, and Virgil, as poets; Thucydides and Livy, as historians. But this, mean time, is to be remarked concerning most of these writers; that each of them spent his whole life in composing and polishing one book. What wonder then if they were exquisitely finished, when so much labour was bestowed upon them? I doubt whether any man in Europe, or in the world, has taken so much pains in finishing any treatise: otherwise it might possibly have equalled, if not excelled, any that went before.

7. But that the generality of men were not one jot wiser in ancient times, than they are at the present time, we may easily gather from the most authentic records. One of the most ancient nations concerning

whom we have any certain account is the Egyptian. And what conception can we have of their understanding and learning, when we reflect upon the objects of their worship? These were not only the vilest of animals, as dogs and cats, but the leeks and onions that grew in their own gardens. Indeed we lately had a great man (whose manner was to treat with the foulest abuse, all that dared to differ from him: I do not mean Dr. Johnson: he was a mere courtier, compared to Mr. Hutchinson) who scurrilously abused all those who are so void of common sense, as to believe any such thing concerning them. He peremptorily affirms, (but without condescending to give us any proof,) that the ancient inhabitants of Egypt had a deep hidden meaning in all this. Let him believe it who can. I cannot believe it on any man's bare assertion. I believe they had no deeper meaning in worshipping cats, than our school boys have in baiting them. And I apprehend, the common Egyptians were just as wise three thousand years ago, as the common ploughmen in England and Wales are at this day. I suppose their natural understanding, like their stature, was on a level with ours; and their learning, their acquired knowledge, many degrees inferior to that of persons of the same rank, either in France, Holland, or Germany.

8. However, did not the people of former times greatly excel us in virtue? This is the point of greatest importance: the rest are but trifles in comparison of it. Now is it not universally allowed, that every age grows worse and worse? Was it not observed by the old heathen poet, almost two thousand years ago;

> Ætas parentum, pejor avis tulit
> Nos nequiores, jam daturos
> Progeniem vitiosiorem.

That is, in plain prose, "The age of our parents was more vicious than that of our grandfathers. Our age is more vicious than that of our fathers. We are worse than our fathers were, and our children will be worse than us."

9. It is certain this has been the common cry from generation to generation. And if it is not true, whence should it arise? How can we account for it? Perhaps another remark of the same poet may help us to an answer. May it not be extracted from the general character which he gives of old men?

> Difficilis, querulus, laudator temporis acti
> Se puero, censor, castigatorque minorum.

Is it not the common practice of the old men, to praise the past and condemn the present time? And this may probably operate much farther, than one would at first imagine. When those that have more experience than us, and therefore we are apt to think more wisdom, are almost continually harping upon this, the degeneracy of the world; those who are accustomed from their infancy to hear how much better the world was formerly than it is now, (and so it really seemed to them when they were young, and just come into the world, and when the cheerfulness of youth gave a pleasing air to all that was round about them,) the idea of the world's being worse and worse, would naturally grow up with them? And so it will be, till we, in our turn, grow peevish, fretful, discontented, and full of melancholy complaints, "How

wicked the world is grown! How much better it was when we were young, in the golden days that we can remember!"

10. But let us endeavour, without prejudice or prepossession, to take a view of the whole affair. And, upon cool and impartial consideration, it will appear that the former days were not better than these: yea, on the contrary, that these are, in many respects, beyond comparison bet ter than them. It will clearly appear, that as the stature of men was nearly the same from the beginning of the world, so the understanding of men, in similar circumstances, has been much the same, from the time of God's bringing a flood upon the earth unto the present hour. We have no reason to believe that the uncivilized nations of Africa, America, or the South sea islands, had ever a better understanding, or were in a less barbarous state than they are now. Neither, on the other hand, have we any sufficient proof, that the natural understandings of men in the most civilized countries, Babylon, Persia, Greece, or Italy, were stronger, or more improved, than those of the Germans, French, or English, now alive. Nay, have we not reason to believe, that by means of better instruments we have attained that knowledge of nature, which few, if any of the ancients ever attained? So that, in this respect, the advantage (and not a little one) is clearly on our side: and we ought to acknowledge with deep thankfulness to the Giver of every good gift, that the former days were not to be compared to these wherein we live.

11. But the principal inquiry still remains. Were not "the former days better than these," with regard to virtue? or, to speak more properly, religion? This deserves a full consideration.

By religion I mean, the love of God and man, filling the heart and governing the life. The sure effect of this is, the uniform practice of justice, mercy, and truth. This is the very essence of it; the height and depth of religion, detached from this or that opinion, and from all particular modes of worship. And I would calmly inquire, Which of the former times were better than these, with regard to this? to the religion experienced and practised by archbishop Fenelon, in France; bishop Kenn, in England; and bishop Bedell, in Ireland?

12. We need not extend our inquiry beyond the period when life and immortality were brought to light by the gospel. And it is allowed, that the days immediately succeeding the pouring out of the Holy Ghost on the day of pentecost, were better even in this respect, even with regard to religion, than any which have succeeded them.

But setting aside this short age of golden days, I must repeat the question, Which of the former days were better than the present, in every known part of the habitable world?

13. Was the former part of this century better, either in these islands or any part of the continent? I know no reason at all to affirm this. I believe every part of Europe was full as void of religion in the reign of queen Anne, as it is at this day. It is true, luxury increases to a high degree in every part of Europe. And so does the scandal of England, profaneness, in every part of the kingdom. But it is also true, that the most infernal of all vices, cruelty, does as swiftly decrease. And such instances of it as in times past continually occurred, are now very seldom heard of. Even in war, that savage barbarity, which was every where practised, has been discontinued for many years.

14. Was the last century more religious than this? In the former part of it, there was much of the form of religion; and some undoubtedly experienced the power thereof. But how soon did the fine gold become dim! How soon was it so mingled with worldly design, and with a total contempt both of truth, justice, and mercy, as brought that scandal upon all religion, which is hardly removed to this day. Was there more true religion in the preceding century; the age of the reformation? There was doubtless in many countries a considerable reformation of religious opinions; yea, and modes of worship, which were much changed for the better, both in Germany and several other places. But it is well known, that Luther himself complained with his dying breath, "The people that are called by my name, (though I wish they were called by the name of Christ,) are reformed as to their opinions and modes of worship; but their tempers and lives are the same they were before." Even then both justice and mercy were so shamelessly trodden under foot, that an eminent writer computes the number of those that were slaughtered during those religious contests, to have been no less than forty millions, within the compass of forty years!

15. We may step back above a thousand years from this, without finding any better time. No historian gives us the least intimation of any such, till we come to the age of Constantine the great. Of this period several writers have given us most magnificent accounts. Yea, one eminent author, no less a man than Dr. Newton, the late bishop of Bristol, has been at no small pains to show, that the conversion of Constantine to Christianity, and the emoluments which he bestowed upon the church with an unsparing hand, were the events which are signified in the Revelation, by "the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven!"

16. But I cannot in any wise subscribe to the bishop's opinion in this matter. So far from it, that I have been long convinced, from the whole tenor of ancient history, that this very event, Constantine's calling himself a Christian, and pouring that flood of wealth and honour on the Christian church, the clergy in particular, was productive of more evil to the church, than all the ten persecutions put together. From the time that power, riches, and honour of all kinds, were heaped upon the Christians, vice of all kinds came in like a flood, both on the clergy and laity. From the time that the church and state, the kingdoms of Christ and of the world, were so strangely and unnaturally blended together, Christianity and heathenism were so thoroughly incorporated with each other, that they will hardly ever be divided, till Christ comes to reign upon earth. So that, instead of fancying, that the glory of the New Jerusalem covered the earth at that period, we have terrible proof that it was then, and has ever since been, covered with the smoke of the bottomless pit.

17. "However, were not the days antecedent to this, those of the third century, better beyond all comparison, than any that followed them?" This has been almost universally believed. Few doubt but in the age before Constantine, the Christian church was in its glory, worshipping God in the beauty of holiness. But was it so indeed? What says St. Cyprian, who lived in the midst of that century; a witness above all exception, and one that sealed the truth with his blood? What account does he give, of what he saw with his own eyes, and heard with his own ears? Such a one as would almost make one ima-

gine, he was painting to the life, not the ancient church of Carthage, but the modern church of Rome. According to his account, such abominations even then prevailed over all orders of men, that it was not strange God poured out his fury upon them in blood, by the grievous persecutions which followed.

18. Yea, and before this, even in the first century, even in the apostolic age, what account does St. John give of several of the churches which he himself had planted in Asia? How little were those congregations better than many in Europe at this day! Nay, forty or fifty years before that, within thirty years of the descent of the Holy Ghost, were there not such abominations in the church of Corinth, as were "not even named among the heathens?" So early did the "mystery of iniquity" begin to work in the Christian church! So little reason have we to appeal to "the former days," as though they were "better than these!"

19. To affirm this, therefore, as commonly as it is done, is not only contrary to truth, but is an instance of black ingratitude to God, and a grievous affront to his blessed Spirit. For whoever makes a fair and candid inquiry, will easily perceive that true religion has in no wise decreased, but greatly increased in the present century. To instance in one capital branch of religion, the love of our neighbour. Is not persecution well nigh vanished from the face of the earth? In what age did Christians of every denomination show such forbearance to each other? When before was such lenity shown by governors towards their respective subjects? Not only in Great Britain and Ireland, but in France and Germany; yea, every part of Europe? Nothing like this has been seen since the time of Constantine; no, not since the time of the apostles.

20. If it be said, "Why this is the fruit of the general infidelity, the deism which has overspread all Europe." I answer, whatever be the cause, we have reason greatly to rejoice in the effect: and if the all wise God has brought so great and universal a good out of this dreadful evil, so much the more should we magnify his astonishing power, wisdom, and goodness herein. Indeed so far as we can judge, this was the most direct way, whereby *nominal* Christians could be prepared, first for tolerating, and afterwards for receiving, *real* Christianity. While the governors were themselves unacquainted with it, nothing but this could induce them to suffer it. Oh the depth both of the wisdom and knowledge of God; causing a total disregard for all religion, to pave the way for the revival of the only religion which was worthy of God! I am not assured whether this be the case or no, in France and Germany; but it is so beyond all contradiction in North America: the total indifference of the government there, whether there be any religion or none, leaves room for the propagation of true, scriptural religion, without the least let or hinderance.

21. But above all this, while luxury and profaneness have been increasing on the one hand, on the other, benevolence and compassion towards all the forms of human wo, have increased in a manner not known before, from the earliest ages of the world. In proof of this, we see more hospitals, infirmaries, and other places of public charity, have been erected, at least in and near London, within this century, than in five hundred years before. And suppose this has been owing

in part to vanity, desire of praise; yet have we cause to bless God, that so much good has sprung even from this imperfect motive.

22. I cannot forbear mentioning one instance more, of the goodness of God to us in the present age. He has lifted up his standard in our islands, both against luxury, profaneness, and vice of every kind. He caused, near fifty years ago, as it were a grain of mustard seed to be sown near London; and it has now grown and put forth great branches, reaching from sea to sea. Two or three poor people met together, in order to help each other to be real Christians. They increased to hundreds, to thousands, to myriads, still pursuing their one point, real religion; the love of God and man ruling all their tempers, and words, and actions. Now I will be bold to say, such an event as this, considered in all its circumstances, has not been seen upon earth before, since the time that St. John went to Abraham's bosom.

23. Shall we now say, "The former days were better than these?" God forbid we should be so unwise and so unthankful. Nay, rather let us praise him all the day long; for he hath dealt bountifully with us. No "former time," since the apostle left the earth, has been better than the present. None has been comparable to it in several respects. We are not born out of due time, but in the day of his power; a day of glorious salvation, wherein he is hastening to renew the whole race of mankind in righteousness and true holiness. How bright hath the Sun of righteousness already shone on various parts of the earth! And how many gracious showers has he already poured down upon his inheritance! How many precious souls has he already gathered into his garner, as ripe shocks of corn! May we be always ready to follow them; crying in our hearts, "Come, Lord Jesus! Come quickly!"

SERMON CVIII.—*What is Man?*

"When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man?" Psa. viii, 3, 4.

How often has it been observed, that the book of Psalms is a rich treasury of devotion, which the wisdom of God has provided to supply the wants of his children in all generations! In all ages the Psalms have been of singular use to those that loved or feared God: not only to the pious Israelites, but to the children of God in all nations. And this book has been of sovereign use to the church of God, not only while it was in its state of infancy, (so beautifully described by St. Paul in the former part of the fourth chapter to the Galatians,) but also since, in the fulness of time, "life and immortality were brought to light by the gospel." The Christians in every age and nation have availed themselves of this divine treasure, which has richly supplied the wants, not only of "babes in Christ," of those who were just setting out in the ways of God, but of those also who had made good progress therein; yea, of such as were swiftly advancing towards "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

The subject of this psalm is beautifully proposed in the beginning of it: "Oh Lord, our Governor, how excellent is thy name in all the earth; who hast set thy glory above the heavens!" It celebrates the

glorious wisdom and love of God, as the Creator and Governor of all things. It is not an improbable conjecture, that David wrote this psalm in a bright star light night, while he observed the moon also "walking in her brightness;" that while he surveyed

> "This fair half round, the ample azure sky,
> Terribly large, and beautifully bright,
> With stars unnumber'd, and unmeasured light,"—

he broke out, from the fulness of his heart, into the natural exultation; 'When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man?" How is it possible that the Creator of these, the innumerable armies of heaven and earth, should have any regard to this speck of creation, whose time "passeth away like a shadow?"

> "Thy frame but dust, thy stature but a span;
> A moment thy duration, foolish man!"

"What is man?" I would consider this, first, With regard to his magnitude: and, secondly, With regard to his duration.

I. 1. Consider we, first, What is man, with regard to his magnitude. And in this respect, what is any one individual, compared to all the inhabitants of Great Britain? He shrinks into nothing in the comparison. How inconceivably little is one compared to eight or ten millions of people? Is he not

> "Lost like a drop in the unbounded main?"

2. But what are all the inhabitants of Great Britain, compared to all the inhabitants of the earth? These have frequently been supposed to amount to about four hundred millions. But will this computation be allowed to be just, by those who maintain China alone to contain fifty-eight millions? If it be true, that this one empire contains little less than sixty millions, we may easily suppose, that the inhabitants of the whole terraqueous globe amount to four thousand millions of inhabitants, rather than four hundred. And what is any single individual, in comparison of this number?

3. But what is the magnitude of the earth itself, compared to that of the solar system? Including, beside that vast body the sun, so immensely larger than the earth, the whole train of primary and secondary planets; several of which (I mean, of the secondary planets, suppose the satellites or moons of Jupiter and Saturn) are abundantly larger than the whole earth?

4. And yet what is the whole quantity of matter contained in the sun, and all those primary and secondary planets, with all the spaces comprised in the solar system, in comparison of that which is pervaded by those amazing bodies, the comets? Who but the Creator himself can "tell the number of these, and call them all by their names?" Yet what is even the orbit of a comet, and the space contained therein, to the space which is occupied by the fixed stars; which are at so immense a distance from the earth, that they appear when they are viewed through the largest telescope, just as they do to the naked eye?

5. Whether the bounds of the creation do or do not extend beyond the region of the fixed stars, who can tell? Only the morning stars, who sang together, when the foundations thereof were laid. But that it is finite, that the bounds of it are fixed, we have no reason to doubt. We

cannot doubt, but when the Son of God had finished all the work which he created and made, he said,

"These be thy bounds!
This be thy just circumference, oh world!"

But what is man to this?

6. We may take one step, and only one step farther still: What is the space of the whole creation; what is all finite space that is, or can be conceived, in comparison of infinite? What is it but a point, a cipher, compared to that which is filled by him that is all in all! Think of this, and then ask, "What is man?"

7. What is man, that the great God, who filleth heaven and earth, "the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity," should stoop so inconceivably low, as to "be mindful of him?" Would not reason suggest to us, that so diminutive a creature would be overlooked by him in the immensity of his works? Especially when we consider,

II. Secondly, What is man, with regard to his duration?

1. The days of man, since the last reduction of human life, which seems to have taken place in the time of Moses, (and not improbably was revealed to the man of God, at the time that he made this declaration,) "are three score years and ten." This is the general standard which God hath now appointed. "And if men be so strong," perhaps one in a hundred, "that they come to four score years; yet then is their strength but labour and sorrow: so soon passeth it away, and we are gone!"

2. Now what a poor pittance of duration is this, compared to the life of Methuselah? "And Methuselah lived nine hundred and sixty and nine years." But what are these nine hundred and sixty and nine years to the duration of an angel, which began "or ever the mountains were brought forth," or the foundations of the earth were laid? And what is the duration which has passed, since the creation of angels, to that which passed before they were created, to unbeginning eternity? To that half of eternity (if one may so speak) which had then elapsed? And what are three score years and ten to this?

3. Indeed what proportion can there possibly be, between any finite and infinite duration? What proportion is there between a thousand or ten thousand years, or ten thousand times ten thousand ages, and eternity? I know not that the inexpressible disproportion between any conceivable part of time and eternity, can be illustrated in a more striking manner, than it is in the well known passage of St. Cyprian: "Suppose there was a ball of sand as large as the globe of earth, and suppose one grain of this were to be annihilated in a thousand years; yet that whole space of time wherein this ball would be annihilating, at the rate of one grain in a thousand years, would bear less, yea, unspeakably, infinitely less proportion to eternity, than a single grain of sand would bear to that whole mass." What then are the seventy years of human life, in comparison of eternity? In what terms can the proportion between these be expressed? It is nothing, yea, infinitely less than nothing!

4. If then we add to the littleness of man the inexpressible shortness of his duration, is it any wonder that a man of reflection should sometimes feel a kind of fear, lest the great, eternal, infinite Governor of the universe, should disregard so diminutive a creature as man? A creature so every way inconsiderable, when compared either with

immensity or eternity? Did not both these reflections glance through, if not dwell upon, the mind of the royal psalmist? Thus, in contemplation of the former, he breaks out into the strong words of the text, "When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, What is man that thou shouldest be mindful of him? Or the son of man that thou shouldest regard him?" He is indeed, (to use St. Augustine's words, *Aliqua portio creaturæ tuæ*,) some portion of thy creation; but *quantula portio*: How amazingly small a portion! How utterly beneath thy notice! It seems to be in contemplation of the latter, that he cries out in the hundred and forty-fourth psalm; "Lord, what is man, that thou hast such respect unto him; or the son of man that thou shouldest so regard him?" "Man is like a thing of nought." Why? "His time passeth away like a shadow." In this, (although in a very few places,) the new translation of the Psalms, that bound up in our Bibles, is perhaps more proper than the old; that which we have in the Common Prayer Book. It runs thus: "Lord, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him? or the son of man, that thou makest account of him?" According to the former translation, David seems to be amazed that the eternal God, considering the littleness of man, should have so much respect unto him, and should so much regard him: but in the latter, he seems to wonder, seeing the life of man "passeth away like a shadow," that God should take any knowledge of him at all, or make any account of him.

5. And it is natural for us to make the same reflection, and to entertain the same fear. But how may we prevent this uneasy reflection, and effectually cure this fear? First, by considering what David does not appear to have taken at all into his account; namely, That the body is not the man: that man is not only a house of clay, but an immortal spirit; a spirit made in the image of God; an incorruptible picture of the God of glory; a spirit that is of infinitely more value than the whole earth. Of more value than the sun, moon, and stars, put together; yea, than the whole material creation. Consider, that the spirit of man is not only of a higher order, of a more excellent nature, than any part of the visible world; but also more durable: not liable either to dissolution or decay. We know all the things "which are seen are temporal;" of a changing, transient nature;—but "the things which are not seen, (such as is the soul of man in particular,) are eternal." "They shall perish," but the soul remaineth. "They all shall wax old as a garment;" but when heaven and earth shall pass away, the soul shall not pass away.

6. Consider, secondly, that declaration which the Father of spirits hath made to us by the prophet Hosea: "I am God, and not man: therefore my compassions fail not." As if he had said, If I were only a man, or an angel, or any finite being, my knowledge might admit of bounds, and my mercy might be limited. But "my thoughts are not as your thoughts, and my mercy is not as your mercy. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my thoughts higher than your thoughts," and "my mercy," my compassion, my ways of showing it, "higher than your ways."

7. That no shadow of fear might remain, no possibility of doubting; to show what manner of regard the great eternal God bears to little

short lived man, but especially to his immortal part; God gave his Son, "his only Son, to the end that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." See how God loved the world! The Son of God, that was God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; in glory equal with the Father, in majesty co-eternal; "emptied himself, took upon him the form of a servant, and being found in fashion as a man, was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." And all this he suffered not for himself, but for us men and for our salvation. "He bore all our sins in his own body upon the tree," that "by his stripes we" might be "healed." After this demonstration of his love, is it possible to doubt any longer of God's tender regard for man; even though he was "dead in trespasses and sins?" Even when he saw us in our sins and in our blood, he said unto us, Live! Let us then fear no more! Let us doubt no more! He that "spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, shall he not with him freely give us all things?"

8. "Nay," says the philosopher, "if God so loved the world, did he not love a thousand other worlds, as well as he did this? It is now allowed, that there are thousands, if not millions of worlds, besides this in which we live. And can any reasonable man believe, that the Creator of all these, many of which are probably as large, yea, far larger than ours, would show such astonishingly greater regard to one than to all the rest?" I answer, Suppose there were millions of worlds, yet God may see, in the abyss of his infinite wisdom, reasons that do not appear to us, why he saw good to show this mercy to ours, in preference to thousands or millions of other worlds.

9. I speak this even upon the common supposition of the plurality of worlds: a very favourite notion with all those who deny the Christian revelation: and for this reason: because it affords them a foundation for so plausible an objection to it. But the more I consider that supposition, the more I doubt of it. Insomuch that, if it were allowed by all the philosophers in Europe, still I could not allow it, without stronger proof than any I have met with yet.

10. "Nay, but is not the argument of the great Huygens, sufficient to put it beyond all doubt? When we view, says that able astronomer, the moon through a good telescope, we clearly discover "rivers and mountains on her spotted globe." Now where rivers are, there are doubtless plants and vegetables of various kinds. And where vegetables are, there are undoubtedly animals; yea, rational ones, as on earth. It follows then, that the moon has its inhabitants, and probably near akin to ours. But if our moon is inhabited, we may easily suppose, so are all the secondary planets; and in particular, all the satellites or moons of Jupiter and Saturn. And if the secondary planets are inhabited, why not the primary? Why should we doubt it of Jupiter and Saturn themselves, as well as Mars, Venus, and Mercury?"

11. But do not you know, that Mr. Huygens himself, before he died, doubted of this whole hypothesis? For upon farther observation, he found reason to believe, that the moon has no atmosphere. He observed, that in a total eclipse of the sun, on the removal of the shade from any part of the earth, the sun immediately shines bright upon it; whereas if the moon had an atmosphere, the solar light, while it shone through that atmosphere, would appear dim and dusky Thus, after

an eclipse of the moon, first a dusky light appears on that part of it, from which the shadow of the earth removes, while that light passes through the atmosphere of the earth. Hence it appears, that the moon has no atmosphere. Consequently, it has no clouds, no rain, no springs, no rivers; and therefore no plants, or animals. But there is no proof or probability that the moon is inhabited; neither have we any proof that the other planets are. Consequently, the foundation being removed, the whole fabric falls to the ground.

12. But, you will say, "Suppose this argument fails, we may infer the same conclusion, the plurality of worlds, from the unbounded wisdom, and power, and goodness of the Creator. It was full as easy to him, to create thousands or millions of worlds as one. Can any one then believe that he would exert all his power and wisdom, in creating a single world? What proportion is there between this speck of creation, and the great God that filleth heaven and earth! While

> 'We know, the power of his Almighty hand
> Could form another world from every sand!'"

13. To this boasted proof, this *argumentum palmarium* of the learned infidels, I answer: Do you expect to find any proportion between finite and infinite? Suppose God had created a thousand more worlds than there are grains of sand in the universe, what proportion would all these together bear to the infinite Creator? Still, in comparison of him, they would be, not a thousand times, but infinitely less than a mite compared to the universe. Have done then with this childish prattle, about the proportion of creatures to their Creator; and leave it to the all-wise God, to create what and when he pleases. For who, besides himself, "hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor?"

14. Suffice it then for us to know this plain and comfortable truth, that the almighty Creator hath shown that regard to this poor, little creature of a day, which he hath not shown even to the inhabitants of heaven, "who kept not their first estate." He hath given us his Son, his only Son, both to live and to die for us! Oh let us live unto him, that we may die unto him, and live with him for ever!

Sermon CIX.—*On Attending the Church Service.*

"The sin of the young men was very great," 1 Sam. ii, 17.

1. The corruption not only of the heathen world, but likewise of them that were called Christians, has been matter of sorrow and lamentation to pious men, almost from the time of the apostles. And hence, as early as the second century, within a hundred years of St. John's removal from the earth, men who were afraid of being partakers of other men's sins, thought it their duty to separate from them. Hence, in every age, many have retired from the world, lest they should be stained with the pollutions of it. In the third century many carried this so far, as to run into deserts and turn hermits. But in the following age this took another turn. Instead of turning hermits, they turned monks. Religious houses now began to be built in every Christian country: and religious communities were established, both of men and

women, who were entirely secluded from the rest of mankind; having no intercourse with their nearest relations; nor with any but such as were confined, generally for life, within the same walls.

2. This spirit of literally renouncing the world, by retiring into religious houses, did not so generally prevail after the reformation. Nay, in Protestant countries, houses of this kind were totally suppressed. But still too many serious persons (chiefly incited thereto by those that are commonly called mystic writers) were eager to seclude themselves from the world, and run into solitude; supposing this to be the best, if not the only way of escaping the pollution that is in the world.

3 One thing which powerfully inclined them to separate from the several churches, or religious societies, to which they had belonged, even from their infancy, was the belief, that no good was to be expected from the ministration of unholy men. "What," said they, "can we think that a holy God will bless the ministry of wicked men? Can we imagine that they who are themselves strangers to the grace of God will manifest that grace to others? Is it to be supposed that God ever did, or ever will work by the children of the devil? And if this cannot be supposed, ought we not to 'come out from among them and be separate?'"

4. For more than twenty years, this never entered into the thoughts of those that were called Methodists. But as more and more who had been brought up Dissenters joined with them, they brought in more and more prejudice against the church. In process of time, various circumstances concurred to increase and to confirm it. Many had forgotten, that we were all at our first setting out determined members of the established church. Yea, it was one of our original rules, that every member of our society should attend the church and sacrament, unless he had been bred among Christians of any other denomination.

5. In order therefore to prevent others from being puzzled and perplexed, as so many have been already, it is necessary, in the highest degree, to consider this matter thoroughly; calmly to inquire, whether God ever did bless the ministry of ungodly men? And whether he does so at this hour? Here is a plain matter of fact: if God never did bless it, we ought to separate from the church; at least where we have reason to believe that the minister is an unholy man; if he ever did bless it, and does so still, then we ought to continue therein.

6. Nineteen years ago we considered this question in our public conference at Leeds; "Whether the Methodists ought to separate from the church?" And, after a long and candid inquiry, it was determined, *nemine contradicente*, that it was not expedient for them to separate. The reasons were set down at large; and they stand equally good at this day.

7. In order to put this matter beyond all possible dispute, I have chosen to speak from these words, which give a fair occasion of observing, what the dealings of God in his church have been, even from so early a period: for it is generally allowed that Eli lived at least a thousand years before our Lord came into the world. In the verses preceding the text, we read, ver. 12, &c, "Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord." They were wicked to an uncommon degree. Their profane violence with respect to the sacrifices, is related with all its shocking circumstances, in the following verses. But (what was a greater abomination still) "they lay with the women

that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation!" ver. 22. On both these accounts, "the sin of the young men was very great; and men abhorred the offering of the Lord."

8. May I be permitted to make a little digression, in order to correct a mistranslation in the twenty-fifth verse? In our translation it runs thus: "They hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the Lord would slay them." Ought it not rather to be rendered, "Therefore the Lord was about to slay them?" As if he had said, The Lord would not suffer their horrid and stubborn wickedness to escape unpunished; but because of that wickedness, he slew them both in one day, by the hand of the Philistines. They did not sin, (as might be imagined from the common translation,) because God had determined to slay them; but God therefore determined to slay them, because they had thus sinned

9. But to return. Their sin was the more inexcusable because they could not be ignorant of that dreadful consequence thereof; that by reason of their enormous wickedness, "men abhorred the offering of the Lord." Many of the people were so deeply offended, that if they did not wholly refrain from the public worship, yet they attended it with pain; abhorring the priests while they honoured the sacrifice.

10. And have we any proof, that the priests who succeeded them were more holy than they, than Hophni and Phinehas; not only till God permitted ten of the tribes to be separated from their brethren, and from the worship he had appointed; but even till Judah as well as Israel, for the wickedness of the priests, as well as of the people, were carried into captivity?

11. What manner of men they were about the time of the Babylonish captivity, we learn from various passages in the prophecy of Jeremiah. From which it manifestly appears, that people and priests wallowed in all manner of vices. And how little they were amended, after they were brought back into their own land, we may gather from those terrible words in the prophecy of Malachi: "And now, oh ye priests, this commandment is for you. If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the Lord of hosts, I will send even a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings. Yea, I have cursed them already, because ye would not lay it to heart. Behold I will curse your seed, and I will spread dung upon their faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts; and men shall take you away with it," Mal. ii, 1, 2.

12. Such were the priests of God in their several generations, till he brought the great High Priest into the world! And what manner of men were they during the time that he ministered upon earth? A large and particular account of their character we have in the twenty-third chapter of St. Matthew: and a worse character it would be difficult to find in all the oracles of God. But may it not be said, "Our Lord does not there direct his discourse to the priests, but to the scribes and Pharisees?" He does: but this is the same thing. For the scribes were what we now term divines; the public teachers of the people. And many, if not most of the priests, especially all the strictest sort of them, were Pharisees: so that in giving the character of the scribes and Pharisees, he gives that of the priests also.

13. Soon after the pouring out of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost in the infancy of the Christian church, there was indeed a glo-

rious change. "Great grace was then upon them all;" ministers as well as people. "The multitude of them that believed, were of one heart and of one soul." But how short a time did this continue! How soon did the fine gold become dim! Long before even the apostolic age expired, St. Paul himself had ground to complain, that some of his fellow labourers had forsaken him, having "loved the present world." And not long after, St. John reproved divers of the angels, that is, the ministers of the churches in Asia, because even in that early period, their "works were not found perfect before God."

14. Thus did "the mystery of iniquity" begin to "work," in the ministers as well as the people, even before the end of the apostolic age. But how much more powerfully did it work, as soon as those master builders the apostles were taken out of the way! Both ministers and people were then farther and farther removed from the hope of the gospel. In so much that when St. Cyprian, about a hundred and fifty years after the death of St. John, describes the spirit and behaviour both of laity and clergy that were round about him, one would be ready to suppose he was giving us a description of the present clergy and laity of Europe. But the corruption which had been creeping in drop by drop, during the second and third century, in the beginning of the fourth, when Constantine called himself a Christian, poured in upon the church with a full tide. And whoever reads the history of the church, from the time of Constantine to the reformation, will easily observe that all the abominations of the heathen world, and in the following ages, of the Mohammedans, overflowed every part of it. And in every nation and city, the clergy were not a whit more innocent than the laity.

15. "But was there not a very considerable change in the body of the clergy, as well as the laity, at the time of the glorious reformation from popery?" Undoubtedly there was: and they were not only reformed from very many erroneous opinions, and from numberless superstitious and idolatrous modes of worship, till then prevailing over the Western church; but they were also exceedingly reformed, with respect to their lives and tempers. More of the ancient, scriptural Christianity was to be found, almost in every part of Europe. Yet notwithstanding this, all the works of the devil, all ungodliness and unrighteousness, sin of every kind, continued to prevail, both over clergy and laity, in all parts of Christendom. Even those clergymen who most warmly contended about the externals of religion, were very little concerned for the life and power of it; for piety, justice, mercy, and truth.

16. However, it must be allowed, that ever since the reformation, and particularly in the present century, the behaviour of the clergy in general is greatly altered for the better. And should it be granted that in so many parts of the Romish church, they are nearly the same as they were before, it must be granted likewise, that most of the Protestant clergy are far different from what they were. They have not only more learning of the most valuable kind, but abundantly much more religion: insomuch that the English and Irish clergy are generally allowed to be not inferior to any in Europe, for piety as well as for knowledge.

17. And all this being allowed, what lack they yet? Can any thing be laid to their charge? I wish calmly and candidly to consider this

point, in the fear and in the presence of God. I am far from desiring to aggravate the defects of my brethren, or to paint them in the strongest colours. Far be it from me, to treat others as I have been treated myself; to return evil for evil, or railing for railing. But to speak the naked truth, not with anger or contempt, as too many have done; I acknowledge, that many, if not most of those that were appointed to minister in holy things, with whom it has been my lot to converse in almost every part of England or Ireland, for forty or fifty years last past, have not been eminent either for knowledge or piety. It has been loudly affirmed, that most of those persons now in connexion with *me*, who believe it their duty to call sinners to repentance, having been taken immediately from low trades; tailors, shoemakers, and the like; are a set of poor, stupid, illiterate men, that scarce know their right hand from their left: yet I cannot but say, that I would sooner cut off my right hand, than suffer one of them to speak a word in any of our chapels, if I had not reasonable proof, that he had more knowledge in the holy Scriptures, more knowledge of himself, more knowledge of God and of the things of God, than nine in ten of the clergymen I have conversed with, either at the universities, or elsewhere.

18. In the mean time I gladly allow that this charge does not concern the whole body of the clergy: undoubtedly there are many clergymen in these kingdoms, that are not only free from outward sin, but men of eminent learning; and what is infinitely more, deeply acquainted with God. But still I am constrained to confess, that the far greater part of those ministers I have conversed with for above half a century, have not been holy men, not devoted to God, not deeply acquainted either with God or themselves. It could not be said, that they set their "affections on things above, not on things of the earth;" or that their desire, and the business of their lives, was, to save their own souls and those that heard them.

19. I have taken this unpleasing view of a melancholy scene, of the character of those who have been appointed of God to be shepherds of souls for so many ages, in order to determine this question: "Ought the children of God to refrain from his ordinances, because they that administer them are unholy men?" A question with which many serious persons have been exceedingly perplexed. "Ought we not," say they "to refrain from the ministrations of ungodly men? For is it possible that we should receive any good from the hands of those that know not God? Can we suppose, that the grace of God was ever conveyed to men by the servants of the devil?"

What saith the Scripture? Let us keep close to this, and we shall not be misled. We have seen there what manner of men most of these have been who have ministered in holy things for many ages. Two or three thousand years ago, we read, "The sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord." But was this a sufficient reason for the Israelites to refrain from their administrations? It is true, they "abhorred the offerings of the Lord," on their account: and yet they constantly attended them. And do you suppose that Samuel, holy as he was, ever advised them to do otherwise? Were not the priests, and public teachers, equally strangers to God, from this time to that of the Babylonish captivity? Undoubtedly they were. But did Isaiah, or any of the prophets, exhort them, for that cause, to forsake the ordinances of

God? Were they not equally ungodly from the time of the Babylonish captivity, to the coming of Christ? How clearly does this appear, were there no other proof, from the prophecies of Jeremiah and Malachi! Yet did either Malachi, or Jeremiah, or any other of the prophets, exhort the people to separate themselves from these ungodly men?

20. But to bring the matter nearer to ourselves. Never were any priests, or public teachers, more corrupt, more totally estranged from God, than those in the days of our blessed Lord. Were they not mere whited walls? Were not those that were the best of them, painted sepulchres? Full of pride, lust, envy, covetousness? Of all ungodliness and unrighteousness? Is not this the account which our Lord himself, who knew what was in man, gives of them? But did he therefore refrain from that public service, which was performed by these very men? Or did he direct his apostles so to do? Nay, just the contrary: in consequence of which, as he constantly attended them himself, so likewise did his disciples.

21. There is another circumstance in our Lord's conduct, which is worthy of our peculiar consideration. "He calls to him the twelve, and sends them forth, two by two," to preach the gospel, Mark vi. And as they do not go the warfare at their own cost, the very "devils were subject unto them." Now one of these was Judas Iscariot. And did our Lord know that "he had a devil?" St. John expressly tells us he did. Yet he was coupled with another of the apostles, and joined with them all in the same communion. Neither have we any reason to doubt but God blessed the labour of all his twelve ambassadors. But why did our Lord send *him* among them? Undoubtedly for our instruction. For a standing, unanswerable proof, that he "sendeth by whom he will send;" that he can and doth send salvation to men, even by those who will not accept of it themselves.

22. Our Lord gives us farther instruction upon this head: in Matthew xxiii, 1–3, we have those very remarkable words: "Then Jesus spoke to the multitude, and his disciples, saying, the scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' chair: all things therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, observe and do; but do not according to their works; for they say and do not." Of these very men, he gives the blackest character in the following verses. Yet is he so far from forbidding either the multitude, or his own disciples, to attend their ministrations; that he expressly commands them so to do, even in those words: "All things whatsoever they bid you observe, observe and do." These words imply a command to hear them: for how could they observe and do what they bid them, if they did not hear it? I pray consider this, ye that say of the successors of these ungodly men, "They say and do not; therefore we ought not to hear them." You see, your Master draws no such inference; nay, the direct contrary. Oh be not wiser than your Master: follow his advice, and do not reason against it!

23. But how shall we reconcile this with the direction given by St. Paul to the Corinthians? "If any that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, with such a one, no not to eat," 1 Cor. v, 11. How is it reconcilable with that direction in his second epistle, chap. vi, 17, "Come out from the midst of them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing?" I answer, the former passage has no relation at all to the present question

It does not concern ministers, good or bad. The plain meaning of it is, have no intimacy with any that is called a Christian, and lives in any open sin: a weighty exhortation, which should be much attended to by all the children of God. As little does the other passage refer to ministers or teachers of any kind. In this the apostle is exhorting the children of God, to break off all intercourse with the children of the devil. The words literally are, "go out from the midst of them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing." Intimating that they could not continue united with them, without being more or less partakers of their sins. We may, therefore, boldly affirm, that neither St. Paul, nor any other of the inspired writers, ever advised holy men to separate from the church wherein they were, because the ministers were unholy.

24. Nevertheless it is true, that many pious Christians, as was observed before, did separate themselves from the church, some even in the second, and many more in the third century. Some of these retired into the desert, and lived altogether alone: others built themselves houses, afterwards termed convents, and only secluded themselves from the rest of the world. But what was the fruit of this separation? The same that might easily be foreseen. It increased, and bestowed, in an astonishing degree, the total corruption of the church. The salt which was thus heaped up in a corner, had effectually lost its savour. The light which was put under a bushel, no longer shone before men. In consequence of this, ungodliness and unrighteousness reigned without control. The world being given up into the hands of the devil, wrought all his works with greediness; and gross darkness, joined with all manner of wickedness, covered the whole earth.

25. "But if all this wickedness was not a sufficient reason for separating from a corrupt church, why did Calvin and Luther, with their followers, separate from the church of Rome?" I answer, They did not properly separate from it; but were violently thrust out of it. They were not suffered to continue therein, upon any other terms than subscribing to all the errors of that church, and joining in all their superstition and idolatry. Therefore this separation lay at *their* door. With us it was not a matter of choice, but of necessity: and if such necessity was now laid upon us, we ought to separate from any church under heaven.

26. There were not the same reasons why various bodies of men should afterwards separate from the church of England. No sinful terms of communion were imposed upon them; neither are at this day. Most of them separated, either because of some opinions, or some modes of worship, which they did not approve of. Few of them assigned the unholiness either of the clergy or laity, as the cause of their separation. And if any did so, it did not appear that they themselves were a jot better than those they separated from.

27. But the grand reason which many give for separating from the church, namely, that the ministers are unholy men, is founded on this assertion: That the ministration of evil men can do no good; that we may call the sacraments means of grace; but men who do not receive the grace of God themselves, cannot convey that grace to others. So that we can never expect to receive the blessing of God, through the servants of the devil.

This argument is extremely plausible, and is indeed the strongest that can be urged. Yet before you allow it to be conclusive, you should consider a few things.

28. Consider, first, Did the Jewish sacraments convey no saving grace to the hearers, because they were administered by unholy men? If so, none of the Israelites were saved, from the time of Eli, to the coming of Christ. For their priests were not a whit better than ours; if they were not much worse. But who will dare to affirm this? Which is no less in effect, than to affirm, that all the children of Israel went to hell for eleven or twelve hundred years together!

29. Did the ordinances, administered in the time of our blessed Lord, convey no grace to those that attended them? Surely, then, the Holy Ghost would not have commended Zacharias and Elizabeth for walking in these ordinances! If the ministrations of wicked men did no good, would our Lord have commanded his followers (so far from forbidding them) to attend those of the scribes and Pharisees? Observe, again, the remarkable words, Matt. xxiii, 1, &c: "Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, saying, The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat,"—are your appointed teachers;—"all, therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do."—Now what were these scribes and Pharisees? Were they not the vilest of men? Yet these very men he commands them to hear. This command is plainly implied in those words: "Whatsoever they command you to observe, that observe and do." For unless they heard what they said, they could not do it.

30. Consider, a little farther, the dreadful consequences of affirming, that wicked ministers do no good: that the ordinances administered by them do not convey saving grace to those that attend them. If it be so, then well nigh all the Christians, from the time of the apostles, to that of the reformation, are perished! For what manner of men were well nigh all the clergy, during all those centuries? Consult the history of the church in every age, and you will find more and more proofs of their corruption. It is true, they have not been so openly abandoned since; but ever since that happy period there has been a considerable change for the better, in the clergy, as well as the laity. But still there is reason to fear, that even those who now minister in holy things, who are outwardly devoted to God for that purpose, (yea, and in Protestant, as well as Romish countries,) are, nevertheless, far more devoted to the world, to riches, honour, or pleasure, (a few comparatively excepted,) than they are to God: so that in truth they are as far from Christian holiness as earth is from heaven. If then no grace is conveyed by the ministry of wicked men, in what a case is the Christian world! How hath God forgotten to be gracious! How hath he forsaken his own inheritance! Oh think not so! Rather say with our own church, (though in direct opposition to the church of Rome, which maintains, "If the priest does not minister with a *pure intention*, which no wicked man can do, then the sacrament is no sacrament at all,") the unworthiness of the minister doth not hinder the efficacy of God's ordinance. The reason is plain, because the efficacy is derived, not from him that administers, but from him that ordains it. He does not, will not suffer his grace to be intercepted, though the messenger will not receive it himself.

31. Another consequence would follow from the supposition, that no grace is conveyed by wicked ministers; namely, that a conscientious person cannot be a member of any national church in the world. For wherever he is, it is great odds, whether a holy minister be stationed there; and if there be not, it is mere lost labour to worship in that congregation. But, blessed be God, this is not the case; we know by our own happy experience, and by the experience of thousands, that the word of the Lord is not bound, though uttered by an unholy minister; and the sacraments are not dry breasts, whether he that administers be holy or unholy.

32. Consider one more consequence of this supposition, should it ever be generally received. Were all men to separate from those churches, where the minister was an unholy man, (as they ought to do, if the grace of God never did, nor could attend his ministry,) what confusion, what tumults, what commotions, would this occasion throughout Christendom! What evil surmisings, heart burning, jealousies, envyings, must every where arise! What censuring, tale bearing, strife, contention! Neither would it stop here: but from evil words the contending parties would soon proceed to evil deeds; and rivers of blood would soon be shed, to the utter scandal of Mohammedans and heathens.

33. Let us not then trouble and embroil ourselves and our neighbours, with unprofitable disputations, but all agree to spread, to the uttermost of our power, the quiet and peaceable gospel of Christ. Let us make the best of whatever ministry the providence of God has assigned us. Near fifty years ago a great and good man, Dr. Potter, then archbishop of Canterbury, gave me an advice, for which I have ever since had occasion to bless God: "If you desire to be extensively useful, do not spend your time and strength, in contending for or against such things as are of a disputable nature; but in testifying against open, notorious vice, and in promoting real, essential holiness." Let us keep to this: leaving a thousand disputable points to those that have no better business, than to toss the ball of controversy to and fro; let us keep close to our point. Let us bear a faithful testimony in our several stations, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness; and with all our might recommend that inward and outward holiness, "without which no man shall see the Lord!"

Sermon CX.—*On Conscience.*

"For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience," 2 Cor i, 12.

1. How few words are there in the world more common than this, conscience? It is in almost every one's mouth. And one would thence be apt to conclude, that no word can be found which is more generally understood. But it may be doubted, whether this is the case or no; although numberless treatises have been written upon it. For it is certain, a great part of those writers have rather puzzled the cause than cleared it; that they have usually "darkened counsel, by uttering words without knowledge."

2. The best treatise on the subject which I remember to have seen, is translated from the French of Mons. Placatt; which describes in a

clear and rational manner the nature and offices of conscience. But though it was published near a hundred years ago, it is in very few hands. And indeed a great part of those that have read it complain of the length of it. An octavo volume of several hundred pages, upon so plain a subject, was likely to prove a trial of patience to most persons of understanding. It seems, therefore, there is still wanting a discourse upon the subject, short as well as clear. This, by the assistance of God, I will endeavour to supply, by showing, first, The nature of conscience; and then, The several sorts of it: after which I shall conclude with a few important directions.

I. 1. And, first, I am to show the nature of conscience. This a very pious man in the last century (in his sermon on universal conscientiousness) describes in the following manner:—"This word, which literally signifies, *knowing with another*, excellently sets forth the scriptural notion of it. So Job xvi, 19, 'My witness is in heaven:' and so the apostle: Rom. ix, 1, 'I say the truth; my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost." In both places it is as if he had said, God witnesseth with my conscience. Conscience is placed in the middle, under God, and above man. It is a kind of silent reasoning of the mind, whereby those things which are judged to be right are approved of with pleasure; but those which are judged evil, are disapproved of with uneasiness." This is a tribunal in the breast of men, to accuse sinners, and excuse them that do well.

2. To view it in a somewhat different light: conscience, as well as the Latin word from which it is taken, and the Greek word, συνειδήσεως, necessarily imply, *the knowledge of two or more things together:* suppose the knowledge of our words and actions, and at the same time of their goodness or badness: if it be not rather the faculty whereby we know at once our actions and the quality of them.

3. Conscience, then, is that faculty, whereby we are at once conscious of our own thoughts, words, and actions; and of their merit or demerit, of their being good or bad; and, consequently, deserving either praise or censure. And some pleasure generally attends the former sentence; some uneasiness the latter: but this varies exceedingly; according to education, and a thousand other circumstances.

4. Can it be denied, that something of this is found in every man born into the world? And does it not appear as soon as the understanding opens? as soon as reason begins to dawn? Does not every one then begin to know that there is a difference between good and evil; how imperfect soever, the various circumstances of this sense of good and evil may be? Does not every man, for instance, know, unless blinded by the prejudices of education, (like the inhabitants of the Cape of Good Hope,) that it is good to honour his parents? Do not all men, however uneducated or barbarous, allow, it is right to do to others, as we would have them do to us? And are not all who know this, condemned in their own mind, when they do any thing contrary thereto? as, on the other hand, when they act suitable thereto, they have the approbation of their own conscience?

5. This faculty seems to be what is usually meant by those who speak of natural conscience: an expression frequently found in some of our best authors, but yet not strictly just. For though in one sense it may be termed natural, because it is found in all men; yet, properly speak

ing, it is not natural, but a supernatural gift of God, above all his natural endowments. No; it is not nature, but the Son of God, that is "the true light, which enlighteneth every man which cometh into the world." So that we may say to every human creature, "He," not nature, "hath showed thee, oh man, what is good." And it is his Spirit who giveth thee an inward check, who causeth thee to feel uneasy, when thou walkest in any instance contrary to the light which he hath given thee.

6. It may give a peculiar force to that beautiful passage, to consider by whom and on what occasion the words were uttered. The persons speaking are, Balak, the king of Moab, and Balaam, then under divine impressions: (it seems, then "not far from the kingdom of God," although afterwards he so foully revolted.) Probably Balak too, at that time, experienced something of the same influence. This occasioned his consulting with, or asking counsel of Balaam,—his proposing the question to which Balaam gives so full an answer: Micah vi, 5, &c, "Oh my people," saith the prophet in the name of God, "remember what Balak the king of Moab consulted," (it seems in the fulness of his heart,) "and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him. Wherewith," said he, "shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression? The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" (This the kings of Moab had actually done, on occasions of deep distress; a remarkable account of which is recorded in the third chapter of the second book of Kings.) To this Balaam makes that noble reply: (being doubtless then taught of God:) "He hath showed thee, oh man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

7. To take a more distinct view of conscience, it appears to have a three fold office: first, it is a witness; testifying what we have done, in thought, or word, or action: secondly, it is a judge, passing sentence on what we have done, that it is good or evil: and thirdly, it, in some sort, executes the sentence, by occasioning a degree of complacency in him that does well, and a degree of uneasiness in him that does evil.

8. Professor Hutcheson, late of Glasgow, places conscience in a different light. In his essay on the passions, he observes, that we have several *senses*, or natural avenues of pleasure and pain, beside the five external senses. One of these he terms, *the public sense;* whereby we are naturally pained at the misery of a fellow creature, and pleased at his deliverance from it. And every man, says he, has a *moral sense;* whereby he approves of benevolence and disapproves of cruelty. Yea, he is uneasy when he himself has done a cruel action, and pleased when he has done a generous one."

9. All this is, in some sense, undoubtedly true. But it is not true, that either the *public* or the *moral sense*, (both of which are included in the term conscience,) is now natural to man. Whatever may have been the case at first, while man was in a state of innocence, both the one and the other is now a branch of that supernatural gift of God, which we usually style, preventing grace. But the professor does not at all agree with this. He sets God wholly out of the question. God has nothing

to do with his scheme of virtue, from the beginning to the end. So that, to say the truth, his scheme of virtue is atheism all over. This is refinement indeed! Many have excluded God out of the world: he excludes him even out of religion!

10. But do we not mistake him? Do we take his meaning right? That it may be plain enough, that no man may mistake him, he proposes this question: "What if a man, in doing a virtuous, that is, a generous action, in helping a fellow creature, has an eye to God, either as commanding, or as promising to reward it? Then, (says he,) so far as he has an eye to God, the virtue of the action is lost. Whatever actions spring from an eye to the recompense of reward, have no virtue, no moral goodness in them." Alas! was this man called a Christian? How unjustly was he slandered with that assertion! Even Dr. Taylor, though he does not allow Christ to be God, yet does not scruple to term him, "a person of consummate *virtue*." But the professor cannot allow him any virtue at all!

11. But to return. What is conscience in the Christian sense? It is that faculty of the soul, which, by the assistance of the grace of God, sees at one and the same time, 1. Our own tempers and lives; the real nature and quality of our thoughts, words, and actions: 2. The rule whereby we are to be directed: and, 3. The agreement or disagreement therewith. To express this a little more largely: conscience implies, first, The faculty a man has of knowing himself; of discerning, both in general and in particular, his own tempers, thoughts, words, and actions. But this it is not possible for him to do, without the assistance of the Spirit of God. Otherwise self love, and indeed every other irregular passion, would disguise, and wholly conceal him from himself. It implies, secondly, a knowledge of the rule, whereby he is to be directed in every particular; which is no other than the written word of God. Conscience implies, thirdly, a knowledge that all his thoughts, and words, and actions, are conformable to that rule. In all these offices of conscience, the "unction of the Holy One" is indispensably needful. Without this, neither could we clearly discern our lives or tempers; nor could we judge of the rule whereby we are to walk, or of our conformity or disconformity to it.

12. This is properly the account of a good conscience; which may be in other terms expressed thus: A divine consciousness of walking in all things according to the written word of God. It seems, indeed, that there can be no conscience, which has not a regard to God. If you say, "Yes, there certainly may be a consciousness of having done right or wrong, without any reference to him." I answer, This I cannot grant. I doubt whether the very words, right and wrong, according to the Christian system, do not imply, in the very idea of them, agreement and disagreement to the will and word of God. If so, there is no such thing as conscience in a Christian, if we leave God out of the question.

13. In order to the very existence of a good conscience, as well as to the continuance of it, the continued influence of the Spirit of God, is absolutely needful. Accordingly, the apostle John declares to the believers of all ages, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things:" all things that are needful to your having "a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man." So he adds, 'Ye have no need that any one should teach you," otherwise "than as

that anointing teacheth you." That anointing clearly teacheth us those three things: first, The true meaning of God's word: secondly, Our own tempers and lives; bringing all our thoughts, words, and actions, to remembrance: and, thirdly, The agreement of all, with the commandments of God.

14. Proceed we now to consider, in the second place, the several sorts of conscience. A good conscience has been spoken of already This St. Paul expresses various ways. In one place he simply terms it, a "good conscience towards God;" in another, "a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man." But he speaks still more largely in the text: "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity," with a single eye, "and godly sincerity, we have had our conversation in the world." Meantime he observes, that this was done, "not by fleshly wisdom;" commonly called prudence; (this never did, nor ever can produce such an effect;) "but by the grace of God:" which alone is sufficient to work this in any child of man.

15. Nearly allied to this, (if it be not the same placed in another view, or a particular branch of it,) is a tender conscience. One of a tender conscience is exact in observing any deviation from the word of God, whether in thought, or word, or work; and immediately feels remorse and self condemnation for it. And the constant cry of his soul is,

> "Oh that my tender soul may fly
> The first abhorr'd approach of ill;
> Quick as the apple of an eye,
> The slightest touch of sin to feel!"

16. But sometimes this excellent quality, tenderness of conscience, is carried to an extreme. We find some who fear where no fear is; who are continually condemning themselves without cause; imagining some things to be sinful, which the Scripture no where condemns; and supposing other things to be their duty, which the Scripture no where enjoins. This is properly termed a scrupulous conscience, and is a sore evil. It is highly expedient to yield to it as little as possible; rather it is a matter of earnest prayer, that you may be delivered from this sore evil, and may recover a sound mind: to which nothing would contribute more, than the converse of a pious and judicious friend.

17. But the extreme which is opposite to this, is far more dangerous. A hardened conscience is a thousand times more dangerous than a scrupulous one: that can violate a plain command of God, without any self condemnation; either doing what he has expressly forbidden, or neglecting what he has expressly commanded; and yet without any remorse; yea, perhaps glorying in this very hardness of heart! Many instances of this deplorable stupidity we meet with at this day; and even among people that suppose themselves to have no small share of religion. A person is doing something which the Scripture clearly forbids. You ask, How do you dare to do this? and are answered with perfect unconcern, "Oh my heart does not condemn me." I reply, "So much the worse. I would to God it did! You would then be in a safer state than you are now. It is a dreadful thing to be condemned by the word of God, and yet not to be condemned by your own heart!" If we can break the least of the known commands of God, without any self condemnation, it is plain that the god of this world

hath hardened our hearts. If we do not soon recover from this, we shall be "past feeling," and our consciences (as St. Paul speaks) will be "seared as with a hot iron."

18. I have now only to add a few important directions. The first great point is this: Suppose we have a tender conscience, how shall we preserve it? I believe there is only one possible way of doing this, which is, to obey it. Every act of disobedience tends to blind and deaden it; to put out its eyes, that it may not see the good and the acceptable will of God; and to deaden the heart, that it may not feel self condemnation, when we act in opposition to it. And on the contrary, every act of obedience gives to the conscience a sharper and stronger sight, and a quicker feeling of whatever offends the glorious majesty of God. Therefore, if you desire to have your conscience always quick to discern, and faithful to accuse or excuse you; if you would preserve it always sensible and tender; be sure to obey it at all events: continually listen to its admonitions, and steadily follow them. Whatever it directs you to do, according to the word of God, do; however grievous to flesh and blood. Whatever it forbids, if the prohibition be grounded on the word of God, see you do it not; however pleasing it may be to flesh and blood. The one or the other may frequently be the case. What God forbids may be pleasing to our evil nature. There you are called to deny yourself, or you deny your Master. What he enjoins may be painful to nature: there take up your cross. So true is our Lord's word: "Except a man deny himself, and take up his cross daily, he cannot be my disciple."

19. I cannot conclude this discourse better, than with an extract from Dr. Annesley's sermon on "Universal Conscientiousness."*

"Be persuaded to practice the following directions, and your conscience will continue right:—

1. "Take heed of every sin: count no sin small; and obey every command with your might. Watch against the first risings of sin, and beware of the borders of sin. Shun the very appearance of evil. Venture not upon temptations or occasions of sin.

2. "Consider yourself as living under God's eye: live as in the sensible presence of the jealous God. Remember, all things are naked and open before him! You cannot deceive him; for he is infinite wisdom: you cannot fly from him; for he is every where: you cannot bribe him; for he is righteousness itself! Speak as knowing God hears you: walk, as knowing God besets you on every side. The Lord is with you, while you are with him: that is, you shall enjoy his favourable presence, while you live in his awful presence.

3. "Be serious and frequent in the examination of your heart and life. There are some duties like those parts of the body, the want of which may be supplied by other parts; but the want of these nothing can supply. Every evening review your carriage through the day; what you have done or thought, that was unbecoming your character: whether your heart has been instant upon religion, and indifferent to the world? Have a special care of two portions of time; namely, morning and evening: the morning to forethink what you have to do; and the evening, to examine, whether you have done what you ought?

* Dr. Annesley (my mother's father) was rector of the parish of Cripplegate.

4. "Let every action have reference to your whole life, and not to a part only. Let all your subordinate ends be suitable to the great end of your living. 'Exercise yourself unto godliness.' Be as diligent in religion, as thou wouldst have thy children that go to school be in learning. Let thy whole life be a preparation for heaven, like the preparation of wrestlers for the combat.

5. "Do not venture on sin, because Christ hath purchased a pardon. that is a most horrible abuse of Christ. For this very reason there was no sacrifice under the law for any wilful sin; lest people should think they knew the price of sins, as those do who deal in popish indulgences.

6. "Be nothing in your own eyes: for what is it, alas, that we have to be proud of! Our very conception was sinful; our birth painful; our life toilsome; our death we know not what! But all this is nothing to the state of our soul. If we know this, what excuse have we for pride?

7. "Consult duty; not events. We have nothing to do but to mind our duty. All speculations that tend not to holiness are among your superfluities: but forebodings of what may befall you in doing your duty, may be reckoned among your sins: and to venture upon sin to avoid danger, is to sink the ship for fear of pirates. Oh how quiet, as well as holy would our lives be, had we learned that single lesson, To be careful for nothing, but to do our duty, and leave all consequencess to God! What madness for silly dust to prescribe to infinite Wisdom! To let go our work, and meddle with God's! He hath managed the concerns of the world, and of every individual person in it, without giving cause of complaint to any, for above these five thousand years. And does he now need *your* counsel? Nay, it is *your* business to mind your own duty.

8. "What advice you would give another, take yourself: the worst of men are apt enough to lay burdens on others, which if they would take on themselves, they would be rare Christians.

9. "Do nothing on which you cannot pray for a blessing. Every action of a Christian that is good, is sanctified by the word and prayer. It becomes not a Christian to do any thing so trivial, that he cannot pray over it. And if he would but bestow a serious ejaculation on every occurrent action, such a prayer would cut off all things sinful, and encourage all things lawful.

10. "Think, and speak, and do what you are persuaded Christ himself would do in your case, were he on earth. It becomes a Christian rather to be an example, than to follow one. But by imitating Christ, you become an example to all, who was, and is, and ever will be, our absolute pattern. Oh Christians, how did Christ pray, and redeem time for prayer! How did Christ preach, out of whose mouth proceeded no other but gracious words! What time did Christ spend in impertinent discourse! How did Christ go up and down, doing good to men, and what was pleasing to God! Beloved, I commend to you these four memorials: 1. Mind duty: 2. What is the duty of another in your case, is your own: 3. Do not meddle with any thing, if you cannot say, The blessing of the Lord be upon it: 4. Above all, sooner forget your Christian name, than forget to eye Christ! Whatever treatment you meet with from the world, remember him and follow his steps, 'who did no

sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. Who when he was reviled, reviled not again: but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.'"

SERMON CXI.—*On Faith.*

"Without faith it is impossible to please him," Heb. xi, 6.

1. BUT what is Faith? It is a divine "evidence and conviction of things not seen:" of things which are not seen now, whether they are visible or invisible in their own nature. Particularly, it is a divine evidence and conviction of God, and of the things of God. This is the most comprehensive definition of faith that ever was or can be given; as including every species of faith, from the lowest to the highest. And yet I do not remember any eminent writer, that has given a full and clear account of the several sorts of it, among all the verbose and tedious treatises which have been published upon the subject.

2. Something indeed of a similar kind has been written by that great and good man, Mr. Fletcher, in his Treatise on the various Dispensations of the Grace of God. Herein he observes, that there are four dispensations that are distinguished from each other, by the degree of light which God vouchsafes to them that are under each. A small degree of light is given to those that are under the heathen dispensation. These generally believed, "that there was a God, and that he was a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." But a far more considerable degree of light was vouchsafed to the Jewish nation; in as much as to them "were entrusted" the grand means of light, "the oracles of God." Hence many of these had clear and exalted views of the nature and attributes of God; of their duty to God and man; yea, and of the great promise made to our first parents, and transmitted by them to their posterity, That "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head."

3. But above both the heathen and Jewish dispensation was that of John the Baptist. To him a still clearer light was given; and he was himself "a burning and a shining light." To whom it was given, to "behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." Accordingly our Lord himself affirms, that "of all which had been born of women," there had not till that time arisen "a greater than John the Baptist." But nevertheless he informs us, "He that is least in the kingdom of God," the Christian dispensation, "is greater than he." By one that is under the Christian dispensation, Mr. Fletcher means, one that has received the Spirit of adoption; that has the Spirit of God witnessing "with his spirit, that he is a child of God."

In order to explain this still farther, I will endeavour, by the help of God,

First, To point out the several sorts of faith: and, secondly, To draw some practical inferences.

I. In the first place, I will endeavour to point out the several sorts of faith. It would be easy, either to reduce these to a smaller number, or to divide them into a greater. But it does not appear that this would answer any valuable purpose.

1. The lowest sort of faith, if it be any faith at all, is that of a materialist: a man who, like the late lord Kames, believes there is nothing but matter in the universe. I say, if it be any faith at all; for, properly speaking, it is not. It is not "an evidence or conviction of God," for they do not believe there is any: neither is it "a conviction of things not seen;" for they deny the existence of such. Or if, for decency's sake, they allow there is a God, yet they suppose even him to be material. For one of their maxims is, "*Jupiter est quodcunque vides.*" "Whatever you see, is God." *Whatever you see!* A visible, tangible god! Excellent divinity! Exquisite nonsense!

2. The second sort of faith, if you allow a materialist to have any, is the faith of a deist. I mean, one who believes there is a God, distinct from matter; but does not believe the Bible. Of these we may observe two sorts: one sort are mere beasts in human shape, wholly under the power of the basest passions, and having "a downright appetite to mix with mud." Other deists are, in most respects, rational creatures, though unhappily prejudiced against Christianity. Most of these believe the being and attributes of God: they believe that God made and governs the world; and that the soul does not die with the body, but will remain for ever in a state of happiness or misery.

3. The next sort of faith is the faith of heathens, with which I join that of Mohammedans. I cannot but prefer this before the faith of the deists; because though it embraces nearly the same objects, yet they are rather to be pitied than blamed for the narrowness of their faith. And their not believing the whole truth, is not owing to want of sincerity, but merely to want of light. When one asked Chicali, an old Indian chief, "Why do not you, red men, know as much as us, white men?" he readily answered, "Because you have the great Word, and we have not!"

4. It cannot be doubted, but this plea will avail for millions of modern heathens. In as much as to them little is given, of them little will be required. As to the ancient heathens, millions of them likewise were savages. No more therefore will be expected of them, than the living up to the light they had. But many of them, especially in the civilized nations, we have great reason to hope, although they lived among heathens, yet were quite of another spirit; being taught of God by his inward voice, all the essentials of true religion. Yea, and so was that Mohammedan, an Arabian, who, a century or two ago, wrote the life of Hai Ebn Yokdan. The story seems to be feigned; but it contains all the principles of pure religion and undefiled.

5. But, in general, we may surely place the faith of a Jew above that of a heathen or Mohammedan. By Jewish faith I mean, the faith of those who lived between the giving of the law and the coming of Christ. These, that is, those that were serious and sincere among them, believed all that is written in the Old Testament. In particular, they believed that, in the fulness of time, the Messiah would appear, "to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, and bring in everlasting righteousness."

6. It is not so easy to pass any judgment concerning the faith of our modern Jews. It is plain, "the veil is still upon their hearts," when Moses and the prophets are read. The god of this world still hardens their hearts, and still blinds their eyes, "lest at any time the light of

the glorious gospel" should break in upon them. So that we may say of this people, as the Holy Ghost said to their forefathers: "The heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed, lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and should be converted, and I should heal them," Acts xxviii, 27. Yet it is not our part to pass sentence upon them, but to leave them to their own Master.

7. I need not dwell upon the faith of John the Baptist, any more than the dispensation which he was under; because these, as Mr. Fletcher well describes them, were peculiar to himself. Setting him aside, the faith of the Roman Catholics in general, seems to be above that of the ancient Jews. If most of these are volunteers in faith, believing more than God has revealed, it cannot be denied, that they believe all which God has revealed, as necessary to salvation. In this we rejoice on their behalf. we are glad that none of those new articles which they added at the council of Trent, to "the faith once delivered to the saints," does so materially contradict any of the ancient articles, as to render them of no effect.

8. The faith of the Protestants, in general, embraces only those truths as necessary to salvation, which are clearly revealed in the oracles of God. Whatever is plainly declared in the Old and New Testament, is the object of their faith. They believe neither more nor less, than what is manifestly contained in, and provable by the Holy Scriptures. The word of God is "a lantern to their feet, and a light in all their paths." They dare not, on any pretence, go from it, to the right hand or to the left. The written word is the whole and sole rule of their faith, as well as practice. They believe whatsoever God has declared, and profess to do whatsoever he hath commanded. This is the proper faith of Protestants: by this they will abide and no other.

9. Hitherto faith has been considered chiefly as an evidence and conviction of such or such truths. And this is the sense wherein it is taken at this day in every part of the Christian world. But in the mean time let it be carefully observed, (for eternity depends upon it,) that neither the faith of a Roman Catholic, nor that of a Protestant, if it contains no more than this, no more than the embracing such and such truths, will avail any more before God, than the faith of a Mohammedan or a heathen; yea, of a deist or materialist. For can this "faith save him?" Can it save any man either from sin or from hell? No more than it could save Judas Iscariot: no more than it could save the devil and his angels; all of whom are convinced, that every tittle of holy Scripture is true.

10. But what is the faith which is properly saving; which brings eternal salvation to all those that keep it to the end? It is such a divine conviction of God, and the things of God, as, even in its infant state, enables every one that possesses it to "fear God and work righteousness." And whosoever in every nation believes thus far, the apostle declares, is "accepted of him." He actually is, at that very moment, in a state of acceptance. But he is at present only a *servant* of God, not properly a *son*. Meantime let it be well observed, that "the wrath of God" no longer "abideth on him."

11. Indeed nearly fifty years ago, when the preachers, commonly called Methodists, began to preach that grand scriptural doctrine, sal-

vation by faith, they were not sufficiently apprized of the difference between a servant and a child of God. They did not clearly understand, that even one "who feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him." In consequence of this, they were apt to make sad the hearts of those whom God had not made sad. For they frequently asked those who feared God, "Do you know that your sins are forgiven?" And upon their answering, "No," immediately replied, "Then you are a child of the devil." No; that does not follow. It might have been said, (and it is all that can be said with propriety,) "Hitherto you are only a *servant*, you are not a *child* of God. You have already great reason to praise God that he has called you to his honourable service. Fear not. Continue crying unto him, 'and you shall see greater things than these.'"

12. And indeed, unless the servants of God halt by the way, they will receive the adoption of sons. They will receive the *faith* of the children of God, by his *revealing* his only begotten Son in their hearts. Thus, the faith of a child is, properly and directly, a divine conviction, whereby every child of God is enabled to testify, "The life that I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." And whosoever hath this, "the Spirit of God witnesseth with his spirit, that he is a child of God." So the apostle writes to the Galatians: "Ye are the sons of God by faith. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father:" that is, giving you a childlike confidence in him, together with a kind affection towards him. This then it is, that (if St. Paul was taught of God, and wrote as he was moved by the Holy Ghost) properly constitutes the difference between a servant of God, and a child of God. "He that believeth" as a child of God, "hath the witness in himself." This the servant hath not. Yet let not man discourage him: rather, lovingly exhort him to expect it every moment!

13. It is easy to observe, that all the sorts of faith which we can conceive, are reducible to one or other of the preceding. But let us covet the best gifts, and follow the most excellent way. There is no reason why you should be satisfied with the faith of a materialist, a heathen, or a deist; nor indeed with that of a servant. I do not know that God requires it at your hands. Indeed, if you have received this, you ought not to cast it away: you ought not in any wise to undervalue it, but to be truly thankful for it. Yet in the mean time, beware how you rest here: press on till you receive the Spirit of adoption. Rest not, till that Spirit clearly witnesses with your spirit, that you are a child of God.

II. I proceed, in the second place, to draw a few inferences from the preceding observations.

1. And I would first infer, in how dreadful a state, if there be a God, is a materialist! One who denies not only the "Lord that bought him," but also the Lord that made him. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." But it is impossible *he* should have any faith at all;—any conviction of any invisible world; for he believes there is no such thing;—any conviction of the being of a God; for a material God is no God at all. For you cannot possibly suppose the sun or skies to be God, any more than you can suppose a god of wood or stone. And farther, whosoever believes all things to be mere matter, must of course believe, that all things are governed by dire necessity! Necessity that

is as inexorable as the winds; as ruthless as the rocks; as merciless as the waves that dash upon them, or the poor shipwrecked mariners! Who then shall help thee, thou poor desolate wretch, when thou art most in need of help? Winds, and seas, and rocks, and storms! Such are the best helpers, which the materialists can hope for!

2. Almost equally desperate is the case of the poor deist, how learned, yea, how moral soever he be. For you likewise, though you may not advert to it, are really "without God in the world." See your religion, the "religion of nature, delineated" by the ingenious Mr. Wollaston: (whom I remember to have seen when I was at school, attending the public service at the Charterhouse chapel.) Does he found his religion upon God? Nothing less. He founds it upon truth: abstract truth. But does he not by that expression mean God? No: he sets him out of the question; and builds a beautiful castle in the air, without being beholden either to him or his word. See your smooth tongued orator of Glasgow, one of the most pleasing writers of the age! Has he any more to do with God, on his system, than Mr. Wollaston? Does he deduce his "idea of virtue," from him as the Father of lights, the source of all good? Just the contrary. He not only plans his whole theory without taking the least notice of God, but towards the close of it proposes that question, "Does the having an eye to God in an action, enhance the virtue of it?" He answers, "No; it is so far from this, that if in doing a virtuous, that is, a benevolent action, a man mingles a desire to please God, the more there is of this desire, the less virtue there is in that action." Never before did I meet with either Jew, Turk, or heathen, who so flatly renounced God, as this Christian professor.

3. But with heathens, Mohammedans, and Jews, we have at present nothing to do: only we may wish that their lives did not shame many of us that are called Christians. We have not much more to do with the members of the church of Rome. But we cannot doubt, that many of them, like the excellent archbishop of Cambray, still retain (notwithstanding many mistakes) that faith that worketh by love. And how many of the Protestants enjoy this, whether members of the church, or of other congregations? We have reason to believe a considerable number, both of one and the other, (and, blessed be God, an increasing number,) in every part of the land.

4. Once more. I exhort you that fear God and work righteousness, you that are *servants* of God, first, flee from all sin, as from the face of a serpent; being,

> "Quick as the apple of an eye,
> The slightest touch of sin to feel;"

and to work righteousness, to the utmost of the power you now have: to abound in works both of piety and mercy: and, secondly, continually to cry to God, that he would reveal his Son in your hearts, to the intent you may be no more *servants* but *sons;* having his love shed abroad in your hearts, and walking in "the glorious liberty of the children of God."

5. I exhort you, lastly, who already feel the Spirit of God witnessing with your spirit, that you are the children of God, follow the advice of the apostle: "Walk in all the good works whereunto ye are created in Christ Jesus." And then, "leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead

works, and of faith towards God," go on to perfection. Yea, and when ye have attained a measure of perfect love, when God has circumcised your hearts, and enabled you to love him with all your heart, and with all your soul, think not of resting there. That is impossible. You cannot stand still: you must either rise or fall; rise higher or fall lower Therefore the voice of God to the children of Israel, to the children of God, is, "Go forward!" "Forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forward unto those that are before, press on to the mark, for the prize of your high calling of God in Christ Jesus!"

Sermon CXII.—*On God's Vineyard.*

"What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" Isa. v, 4.

The *vineyard of the Lord*, taking the word in its widest sense, may include the whole world. All the inhabitants of the earth, may, in some sense, be called, "the vineyard of the Lord;" "who hath made all nations of men, to dwell on all the face of the earth; that they might seek the Lord, if haply they may feel after him, and find him." But, in a narrower sense, the vineyard of the Lord, may mean, the Christian world; that is, all that name the name of Christ, and profess to obey his word. In a still narrower sense, it may be understood of what is termed, the reformed part of the Christian church. In the narrowest of all, one may, by that phrase, "the vineyard of the Lord," mean, the body of people commonly called Methodists. In this sense I understand it now, meaning thereby that society only, which began at Oxford, in the year 1729, and remain united at this day. Understanding the word in this sense, I repeat the question which God proposes to the prophet: "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?"

What could God have done more in this his vineyard, (suppose he had designed it should put forth great branches and spread over the earth,) which he hath not done in it;

I. With regard to doctrine?

II. With regard to scriptural helps?

III. With regard to discipline? And,

IV. With regard to outward protection?

These things being considered, I would then briefly inquire, "Wherefore, when he looked it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?"

I. 1. First, What could have been done in this his vineyard, which God hath not done in it? What could have been done more with regard to doctrine? From the very beginning, from the time that four young men united together, each of them was *homo unius libri;* "a man of one book." God taught them all, to make his "word a lantern unto their feet, and a light in all their paths." They had one, and only one, rule of judgment with regard to all their tempers, words, and actions; namely, the oracles of God. They were one and all determined to be Bible Christians. They were continually reproached for

this very thing: some terming them, in derision, Bible bigots: others, Bible moths: feeding, they said, upon the Bible, as moths do upon cloth. And indeed, unto this day, it is their constant endeavour to think and speak as the oracles of God.

2. It is true, a learned man, Dr. Trapp, soon after their setting out, gave a very different account of them. "When I saw," said the Doctor, "these two books, 'The Treatise on Christian Perfection,' and 'The Serious Call to a Holy Life,' I thought these books will certainly do mischief. And so it proved; for presently after up sprung the Methodists. So he (Mr. Law) was their parent." Although this was not entirely true, yet there was some truth in it. All the Methodists carefully read these books, and were greatly profited thereby. Yet they did by no means spring from them, but from the Holy Scriptures: being "born again," as St. Peter speaks, "by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."

3. Another learned man, the late bishop Warburton, roundly affirms, that, "They were the offspring of Mr. Law and count Zinzendorf together." But this was a greater mistake still. For they had met together several years before they had the least acquaintance with count Zinzendorf, or even knew there was such a person in the world. And when they did know him, although they esteemed him very highly in love, yet they did not dare to follow him one step farther than they were warranted by the Scripture.

4. The book which, next to the Holy Scripture, was of the greatest use to them, in settling their judgment as to the grand point of justification by faith, was the book of Homilies. They were never clearly convinced, that we are justified by faith alone, till they carefully consulted these, and compared them with the sacred writings, particularly St. Paul's epistle to the Romans. And no minister of the church can, with any decency, oppose these; seeing at his ordination he subscribed to them, in subscribing the thirty-sixth article of the church.

5. It has been frequently observed, that very few were clear in their judgment both with regard to justification and sanctification. Many who have spoken and written admirably well, concerning justification, had no clear conception, nay, were totally ignorant of the doctrine of sanctification. Who has wrote more ably than Martin Luther, on justification by faith alone? And who was more ignorant of the doctrine of sanctification, or more confused in his conceptions of it? In order to be thoroughly convinced of this, of his total ignorance with regard to sanctification, there needs no more than to read over, without prejudice, his celebrated comment on the epistle to the Galatians. On the other hand, how many writers of the Romish church (as Francis Sales and Juan de Castaniza, in particular) have wrote strongly and scripturally on sanctification; who, nevertheless, were entirely unacquainted with the nature of justification? Insomuch that the whole body of their divines at the council of Trent, in their *Catechismus ad Parochos*, (catechism which every parish priest is to teach his people,) totally confound sanctification and justification together. But it has pleased God to give the Methodists a full and clear knowledge of each, and the wide difference between them.

6. They know, indeed, that at the same time a man is justified, sanctification properly begins. For when he is justified, he is "born

again,' "born from above," "born of the Spirit:" which, although it is not (as some suppose) the whole process of sanctification, is doubtless the gate of it. Of this, likewise, God has given them a full view. They know, the new birth implies as great a change in the soul, in him that is "born of the Spirit," as was wrought in his body when he was born of a woman: not an outward change only, as from drunkenness to sobriety, from robbery or theft to honesty, (this is the poor, dry, miserable conceit of those that know nothing of real religion,) but an inward change from all unholy, to all holy tempers; from pride, to humility; from passionateness, to meekness; from peevishness and discontent, to patience and resignation: in a word, from an earthly, sensual, devilish mind, to the mind that was in Christ Jesus.

7. It is true, a late very eminent author, in his strange treatise on regeneration, proceeds entirely on the supposition, that it is the whole gradual progress of sanctification. No; it is only the threshold of sanctification; the first entrance upon it. And as, in the natural birth, a man is born at once, and then grows larger and stronger by degrees; so in the spiritual birth, a man is born at once, and then gradually increases in spiritual stature and strength. The new birth, therefore, is the first point of sanctification, which may increase more and more unto the perfect day.

8. It is, then, a great blessing given to this people, that as they do not think or speak of justification, so as to supersede sanctification; so neither do they think or speak of sanctification, so as to supersede justification. They take care to keep each in its own place; laying equal stress on one and the other. They know, God has joined these together, and it is not for man to put them asunder: therefore they maintain, with equal zeal and diligence, the doctrine of free, full, present justification, on the one hand; and of entire sanctification both of heart and life, on the other: being as tenacious of inward holiness, as any Mystic; and of outward, as any Pharisee.

9. Who then is a Christian, according to the light which God hath vouchsafed to this people? He that, being "justified by faith, hath peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ;" and, at the same time, is "born again," "born from above," "born of the Spirit;" inwardly changed from the image of the devil, to that "image of God wherein he was created:" he that finds the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto him; and whom this love sweetly constrains to love his neighbour, every man, as himself: he that has learned of his Lord to be meek and lowly in heart, and in every state to be content: he in whom is that whole mind, all those tempers, which were also in Christ Jesus: he that abstains from all appearance of evil, in his actions; and that offends not with his tongue: he that walks in all the commandments of God, and in all his ordinances, blameless: he that, in all his intercourse with men, does to others as he would they should do to him; and in his whole life and conversation, whether he eats or drinks, or whatsoever he doeth, doeth all to the glory of God.

Now what could God have done more for this his vineyard, which he hath not done in it, with regard to doctrine? We are to inquire,

II. Secondly, What could have been done which he hath not done in it, with regard to spiritual helps?

1. Let us consider this matter from the very beginning. Two young clergymen, not very remarkable any way, of middle age, having a tolerable measure of health, though rather weak than strong, began, about fifty years ago, to call sinners to repentance. This they did, for a time, in many of the churches in and about London. But two difficulties arose: first, the churches were so crowded, that many of the parishioners could not get in: secondly, they preached new doctrines; that we are saved by faith, and that "without holiness no man could see the Lord." For one or other of these reasons, they were not long suffered to preach in the churches. They then preached in Moorfields, Kennington Common, and in many other public places. The fruit of their preaching quickly appeared. Many sinners were changed both in heart and life. But it seemed, this could not continue long; for every one clearly saw, these preachers would quickly wear themselves out; and no clergyman dared to assist them. But soon one and another, though not ordained, offered to assist them. God gave a signal blessing to their word. Many sinners were thoroughly convinced of sin, and many truly converted to God. Their assistants increased, both in number, and in the success of their labours. Some of them were learned; some unlearned: most of them were young; a few middle aged: some of them were weak; some, on the contrary, of remarkably strong understanding. But it pleased God to own them all; so that more and more brands were plucked out of the burning.

2. It may be observed, that these clergymen, all this time, had no plan at all. They only went hither and thither, wherever they had a prospect of saving souls from death. But when more and more asked, "What must I do to be saved?" they were desired to meet all together. Twelve came the first Thursday night; forty the next; soon after a hundred. And they continued to increase, till three or four and twenty years ago, the London society amounted to about 2,800.

3. But how should this multitude of people be kept together? And how should it be known, whether they walked worthy of their profession? They were providentially led, when they were thinking on another thing, namely, paying the public debt, to divide all the people into little companies, or classes, according to their places of abode, and appoint one person in each class to see all the rest weekly. By this means, it was quickly discovered if any of them lived in any known sin. If they did, they were first admonished; and, when judged incorrigible, excluded from the society.

4. This division of the people, and exclusion of those that walked disorderly, without any respect of persons, were helps which few other communities had. To these, as the societies increased, was soon added another. The stewards of the societies in each district, were desired to meet the preachers once a quarter, in some central place, to give an account of the spiritual and temporal state of their several societies. The use of these quarterly meetings was soon found to be exceeding great; in consideration of which, they were gradually spread to all the societies in the kingdom.

5. In order to increase the union between the preachers, as well as that of the people, they were desired to meet altogether in London; and, some time after, a select number of them. Afterwards, for more convenience, they met at London, Bristol, and Leeds, alternately,

They spent a few days together in this general conference; in considering, what might most conduce to the general good. The result was immediately signified to all their brethren. And they soon found, that what St. Paul observes of the whole church, may be, in a measure, applied to every part of it: "The whole body being fitly framed together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, maketh increase of the body to the edifying of itself in love," Eph. iv, 16.

6. That this may be the more effectually done, they have another excellent help in the constant change of preachers: it being their rule that no preacher shall remain in the same circuit more than two years together; and few of them more than one year. Some, indeed, have imagined, that this was a hinderance to the work of God. But long experience, in every part of the kingdom, proves the contrary. This has always shown, that the people profit less by any one person than by a variety of preachers: while they

> "Used the gifts on each bestow'd,
> Temper'd by the art of God."

7. Together with these helps, which are peculiar to their own society, they have all those which are enjoyed in common by the other members of the church of England. Indeed they have been long pressed to separate from it; to which they have had temptations of every kind. But they cannot, they dare not, they will not separate from it, while they can remain therein with a clear conscience. It is true, if any sinful terms of communion were imposed upon them, then they would be constrained to separate; but as this is not the case at present, we rejoice to continue therein.

8. What then could God have done more for his vineyard, which he hath not done in it, with regard to spiritual helps? He has hardly dealt so with any other people in the Christian world. If it be said, He could have made them a separate people, like the Moravian brethren; I answer, This would have been a direct contradiction to his whole design in raising them up; namely, to spread scriptural religion throughout the land, among people of every denomination; leaving every one to hold his own opinions, and to follow his own mode of worship. This could only be done effectually, by leaving these things as they were, and endeavouring to leaven the whole nation with that "faith that worketh by love."

III. 1. Such are the spiritual helps which God has bestowed on this his vineyard, with no sparing hand. Discipline might be inserted among these; but we may as well speak of it under a separate head. It is certain, that in this respect the Methodists are a highly favoured people. Nothing can be more simple, nothing more rational, than the Methodist discipline: it is entirely founded on common sense, particularly applying the general rules of Scripture. Any person determined to save his soul, may be united (this is the only condition required) with them. But this desire must be evidenced by three marks: avoiding all known sin; doing good after his power; and, attending all the ordinances of God. He is then placed in such a class as is convenient for him, where he spends about an hour in a week. And the next quarter, if nothing is objected to him he is admitted into the society: and therein he may continue, as long as he continues to meet his brethren, and walks according to his profession.

2. Their public service is at five in the morning, and six or seven in the evening, that their temporal business may not be hindered. Only on Sunday it begins between nine and ten, and concludes with the Lord's supper. On Sunday evening the society meets: but care is taken to dismiss them early, that all the heads of families may have time to instruct their several households. Once a quarter, the principal preacher in every circuit examines every member of the societies therein. By this means, if the behaviour of any one is blameable, which is frequently to be expected in so numerous a body of people, it is easily discovered, and either the offence or the offender removed in time.

3. Whenever it is needful to exclude any disorderly member out of the society, it is done in the most quiet and inoffensive manner: only by not renewing his ticket, at the quarterly visitation. But in some cases, where the offence is great, and there is danger of public scandal, it is judged necessary to declare, when all the members are present, "A. B. is no longer a member of our society." Now what can be more rational or more scriptural, than this simple discipline; attended from the beginning to the end with no trouble, expense, or delay?

IV. 1. But was it possible that all these things should be done without a flood of opposition? The prince of this world was not dead, nor asleep: and would he not fight, that his kingdom might not be delivered up? If the word of the apostle be found true, in all ages and nations, "All they that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution." If this be true with regard to every individual Christian, how much more, with regard to bodies of men visibly united together, with the avowed design to overthrow his kingdom! And what could withstand the persecution he would not fail to stir up against a poor, defenceless, despised people, without any visible help, without money, without power, without friends?

2. In truth the god of this world was not asleep. Neither was he idle: he *did* fight, and that with all his power, that his kingdom might not be delivered up. He "brought forth all his hosts to war." First, he stirred up the beasts of the people. They roared like lions: they encompassed the little and defenceless on every side. And the storm rose higher and higher, till deliverance came in a way that none expected. God stirred up the heart of our late gracious sovereign to give such orders to his magistrates as, being put in execution, effectually quelled the madness of the people. It was about the same time that a great man applied personally to his majesty, begging that he would please to "take a course to stop these runabout preachers." His majesty, looking sternly upon him, answered without ceremony, like a king; "I tell you, while I sit on the throne, no man shall be persecuted for conscience' sake."

3. But in defiance of this, several who bore his majesty's commission, have persecuted them from time to time; and that under colour of law; availing themselves of what is called the conventicle act: one in particular, in Kent, who, some years since, took upon him to fine one of the preachers and several of his hearers. But they thought it their duty to appeal to his majesty's court of king's bench. The cause was given for the plaintiffs; who have ever since been permitted to worship God according to their own conscience.

4. I believe this is a thing wholly without precedent. I find no other instance of it, in any age of the church from the day of pentecost to this day. Every opinion, right and wrong, has been tolerated, almost in every age and nation. Every mode of worship has been tolerated, however superstitious or absurd. But I do not know that true, vital, scriptural religion was ever tolerated before. For this the people called Methodists have abundant reason to praise God. In their favour, he hath wrought a new thing in the earth: he hath stilled the enemy and the avenger. This then they must ascribe unto him, the author of their outward as well as inward peace.

V. 1. What indeed could God have done more for this his vineyard, which he hath not done in it? This having been largely showed, we may now proceed to that strong and tender expostulation: After all that I had done, might I not have looked for the most excellent grapes; wherefore, then, brought it forth wild grapes? Might I not have expected a general increase of faith and love, of righteousness and true holiness; yea, and of the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, long suffering, meekness, gentleness, fidelity, goodness, temperance? Was it not reasonable to expect that these fruits would have overspread his whole church? Truly when I saw what God had done among his people between forty and fifty years ago, when I saw them warm in their first love, magnifying the Lord and rejoicing in God their Saviour, I could expect nothing less than that all these would have lived like angels here below; that they would have walked as continually seeing him that is invisible; having constant communion with the Father and the Son; living in eternity, and walking in eternity. I looked to see "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people," in the whole tenor of their conversation; "showing forth his praise, who had called them into his marvellous light."

2. But instead of this it brought forth wild grapes: fruit of a quite contrary nature. It brought forth error in ten thousand shapes, turning many of the simple out of the way. It brought forth enthusiasm, imaginary inspiration, ascribing to the all wise God, all the wild, absurd, self inconsistent dreams of a heated imagination. It brought forth pride, robbing the Giver of every good gift of the honour due to his name. It brought forth prejudice, evil surmising, censoriousness, judging and condemning one another; all totally subversive of that brotherly love, which is the very badge of the Christian profession: without which whosoever liveth is counted dead before God. It brought forth anger, hatred, malice, revenge, and every evil word and work: all direful fruits, not of the Holy Spirit, but of the bottomless pit!

3. It brought forth likewise in many, particularly those that are increased in goods, that grand poison of souls, the love of the world; and that in all its branches: "the desire of the flesh;" that is, the seeking happiness in the pleasures of sense;—"the desire of the eyes;" that is, seeking happiness in dress, or any of the pleasures of imagination;—and "the pride of life;" that is, seeking happiness in the praise of men; or in that which ministers to all these, laying up treasures on earth. It brought forth self indulgence of every kind, delicacy, effeminacy, softness: but not softness of the right kind, that melts at human wo. It brought such base, grovelling affections, such deep earthly mindedness, as that of the poor heathens, which occasioned the lamentation of their

own poet over them, *O curvæ in terras animæ et cælestium inanes!* "Oh souls bowed down to earth and void of God!"

4. Oh ye that have riches in possession, once more hear the word of the Lord! Ye that are rich in this world, that have food to eat, and raiment to put on, and something over, are you clear of the curse of loving the world? Are you sensible of your danger? Do you feel, "How hardly will they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven?" Do you continue unburned in the midst of the fire? Are you untouched with the love of the world? Are you clear from the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life? Do you "put a knife to your throat," when you sit down to meat, lest your table should be a snare to you? Is not your belly your god? Is not eating and drinking, or any other pleasure of sense, the greatest pleasure you enjoy? Do not you seek happiness in dress, furniture, pictures, gardens; or any thing else that pleases the eye? Do not you grow soft and delicate? Unable to bear cold, heat, the wind or the rain, as you did when you were poor? Are you not increasing in goods, laying up treasures on earth; instead of restoring to God in the poor, not so much, or so much, but all that you can spare? Surely "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven!"

5. But why will ye still bring forth wild grapes? What excuse can ye make? Hath God been wanting on *his* part? Have you not been warned over and over? Have ye not been fed with "the sincere milk of the word?" Hath not the whole word of God been delivered to you, and without any mixture of error? Were not the fundamental doctrines both of free, full, present justification delivered to you, as well as sanctification, both gradual and instantaneous? Was not every branch both of inward and outward holiness clearly opened, and earnestly applied; and that by preachers of every kind; young and old, learned and unlearned? But it is well if some of you did not despise the helps which God had prepared for you. Perhaps you would hear none but clergymen; or, at least, none but men of learning. Will you not then give God leave to choose his own messengers? To send by whom he will send? It is well if this bad wisdom was not one cause of your bringing forth wild grapes!

6. Was not another cause of it your despising that excellent help, union with a Christian society? Have you not read, "How can one be warm alone;" and, "Wo be unto him that is alone when he falleth?" "But you have companions enough." Perhaps more than enough; more than are helpful to your soul. But have you enough that are athirst for God, and that labour to make *you* so? Have you companions enough, that watch over your soul, as they that must give account; and that freely and faithfully warn you, if you take any false step, or are in danger of doing so? I fear, you have few of these companions, or else you would bring forth better fruit!

7. If you are a member of the society, do you make a full use of your privilege? Do you never fail to meet your class; and that not as matter of form, but expecting that when you are met together in his name, your Lord will be in the midst of you? Are you truly thankful for the amazing liberty of conscience, which is vouchsafed to you and your brethren; such as never was enjoyed before, by persons in your

circumstances? And are you thankful to the Giver of every good gift, for the general spread of true religion? Surely you can never praise God enough for all these blessings, so plentifully showered down upon you, till you praise him with angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven!

Sermon CXIII.—*On Riches.*

"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God," Matt. xix, 24.

1. In the preceding verses we have an account of a young man, who came running to our Lord, and kneeling down, not in hypocrisy, but in deep earnestness of soul; and said unto him, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" All the commandments, saith he, "I have kept from my youth: what lack I yet?" Probably he had kept them in the literal sense; yet he still loved the world. And He who knew what was in man, knew that, in this particular case, (for this is by no means a general rule,) he could not be healed of that desperate disease, but by a desperate remedy. Therefore he answered, "Go and sell all that thou hast, and give it to the poor: and come and follow me. But when he heard this, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions." So all the fair blossoms withered away! For he would not lay up treasure in heaven at so high a price! Jesus, observing this, "looked round about, and said unto his disciples," Mark x, 23, &c, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God! And they were astonished out of measure, and said among themselves, Who then can be saved?" If it be so difficult for rich men to be saved, who have so many and so great advantages, who are free from the cares of this world, and a thousand difficulties, to which the poor are continually exposed!

2. It has indeed been supposed, he partly retracts what he had said concerning the difficulty of rich men's being saved, by what is added in the tenth chapter of St. Mark. For after he had said, verse 23, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" when "the disciples were astonished at his words, Jesus answered again," and said unto them, "How hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!" verse 24. But observe, 1. Our Lord did not mean hereby, to retract what he had said before. So far from it, that he immediately confirms it, by that awful declaration: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." Observe, 2. Both one of these sentences and the other assert the very same thing. For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for those that *have riches* not to *trust* in them.

3. Perceiving their astonishment at this hard saying, "Jesus looking upon them," (undoubtedly with an air of inexpressible tenderness, to prevent their thinking the case of the rich desperate,) "saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible."

4. I apprehend, by a rich man here is meant, not only a man that has immense treasures, one that has heaped up gold as dust, and silver as the sand of the sea; but any one that possesses more than the necessaries and conveniences of life. One that has food and raiment sufficient for himself and his family, and something over, is rich. By the kingdom of God, or of heaven, (exactly equivalent terms,) I believe is meant, not the kingdom of glory, (although that will, without question, follow,) but the kingdom of heaven; that is, true religion upon earth. The meaning then of our Lord's assertion is this, That it is absolutely impossible, unless by that power to which all things are possible, that a rich man should be a Christian; to have the mind that was in Christ, and to walk as Christ walked: such are the hinderances to holiness, as well as the temptations to sin, which surround him on every side.

I. Such are the hinderances to holiness, which surround him on every side. To enumerate all these would require a large volume: I would only touch upon a few of them.

1. The root of all religion is faith, without which it is impossible to please God. Now whether you take this in its general acceptation, for an "evidence of things not seen," of the invisible and the eternal world, of God and the things of God; how natural a tendency have riches to darken this evidence, to prevent your attention to God and the things of God, and to things invisible and eternal! And if you take it in another sense, for a confidence; what a tendency have riches to destroy this; to make you trust, either for happiness or defence, in them, not "in the living God!" Or if you take faith in the proper Christian sense, as a divine confidence in a pardoning God; what a deadly, what an almost insuperable hinderance to this faith are riches! What! can a wealthy, and consequently an honourable man, come to God, as having nothing to pay? Can he lay all his greatness by, and come as a sinner, a mere sinner, the vilest of sinners; as on a level with those that feed the dogs of his flock; with that "beggar who lies at his gate full of sores?" Impossible; unless by the same power that made the heavens and the earth. Yet without doing this, he cannot, in any sense, "enter into the kingdom of God."

2. What a hinderance are riches to the very first fruit of faith; namely, the love of God! "If any man love the world," says the apostle, "the love of the Father is not in him." But how is it possible for a man not to love the world, who is surrounded with all its allurements? How can it be, that he should then hear the still small voice, which says, "My son, give me thy heart?" What power less than Almighty, can send the rich man an answer to that prayer:

> "Keep me dead to all below,
> Only Christ resolved to know:
> Firm, and disengaged, and free,
> Seeking all my bliss in thee!"

3. Riches are equally a hinderance to the loving our neighbour as ourselves; that is, to the loving all mankind, as Christ loved us. A rich man may indeed love them that are of his own party, or his own opinion. He may love them that love him: "Do not even heathens," baptized or unbaptized, "the same?" But he cannot have pure, disinterested good will to every child of man. This can only spring from the love of God, which his great possessions expelled from his soul.

4 From the love of God, and from no other fountain, true humility likewise flows. Therefore, so far as they hinder the love of God, riches must hinder humility likewise. They hinder this also in the rich, by cutting them off from that freedom of conversation, whereby they might be made sensible of their defects, and come to a true knowledge of themselves. But how seldom do they meet with a faithful friend; with one that can and will deal plainly with them! And without this, we are likely to grow grey in our faults; yea, to die "with all our imperfections on our head."

5. Neither can meekness subsist without humility: for "of pride" naturally "cometh contention." Our Lord accordingly directs us to learn of him at the same time "to be meek and lowly in heart." Riches therefore are as great a hinderance to meekness as they are to humility. In preventing lowliness of mind, they of consequence prevent meekness; which increases in the same proportion as we sink in our own esteem; and, on the contrary, necessarily decreases, as we think more highly of ourselves.

6. There is another Christian temper which is nearly allied to meekness and humility: but it has hardly a name St. Paul terms it, επιεικια. Perhaps till we find a better name, we may call it *yieldingness:* a readiness to submit to others; to give up our own will. This seems to be the quality which St. James ascribes to "the wisdom from above," when he styles it ευπειθης: which we render, *easy to be entreated; easy to be convinced* of what is true; *easy to be persuaded.* But how rarely is this amiable temper to be found in a wealthy man? I do not know that I have found such a prodigy ten times, in above three score and ten years!

7. And how uncommon a thing is it to find patience in those that have large possessions! Unless when there is a counterbalance of long and severe affliction, with which God is frequently pleased to visit those he loves, as an antidote to their riches. This is not uncommon: he often sends pains, and sickness, and great crosses, to them that have great possessions. By these means, "patience has its perfect work," till they are "perfect and entire, lacking nothing."

II. Such are some of the hinderances to holiness, which surround the rich on every side. We may now observe, on the other side, what a temptation riches are, to all unholy tempers.

1. And, first, how great is the temptation to atheism, which naturally flows from riches; even to an entire forgetfulness of God, as if there was no such being in the universe. This is at present usually termed dissipation: a pretty name, affixed by the great vulgar, to an utter disregard for God, and indeed for the whole invisible world. And how is the rich man surrounded with all manner of temptations to continual dissipation! Yes, how is the art of dissipation studied among the rich and great! As Prior keenly says;

> "Cards are dealt, and dice are brought,
> Happy effects of human wit,
> That Alma may herself forget."

Say rather, "that mortals may their God forget:" that they may keep him utterly out of their thoughts, who, though he sitteth on the circle of the heavens, yet is "about their bed, and about their path, and spieth out all their ways." Call this wit, if you please; but is it

wisdom? Oh no! It is far, very far from it. Thou fool! dost thou imagine because thou dost not see God, that God doth not see thee? Laugh on; play on; sing on; dance on: but "for all these things God will bring thee to judgment!"

2. From atheism, there is an easy transition to idolatry; from the worship of no God, to the worship of false gods: and, in fact, he that does not love God, (which is his proper, and his only proper worship,) will surely love some of the works of his hands; will love the creature, if not the Creator. But to how many species of idolatry is every rich man exposed! What continual and almost insuperable temptations is he under to "love the world;" and that in all its branches! "The desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life." What innumerable temptations will he find to gratify the "desire of the flesh!" Understand this right. It does not refer to one only, but all the outward senses. It is equal idolatry, to seek our happiness in gratifying any or all of these. But there is the greatest danger, lest men should seek it in gratifying their taste; in a moderate sensuality; in a regular kind of epicurism; not in gluttony or drunkenness: far be that from them! They do not disorder the body; they only keep the soul dead; dead to God and all true religion.

3. The rich are equally surrounded with temptations from the "desire of the eyes:" that is, the seeking happiness in gratifying the imagination; the pleasures of which the eyes chiefly minister. The objects that give pleasure to the imagination are grand, or beautiful, or new. Indeed all rich men have not a taste for grand objects: but they have for new and beautiful things; especially for new: the desire of novelty being as natural to men, as the desire of meat and drink. Now how numerous are the temptations to this kind of idolatry, which naturally springs from riches! How strongly and continually are they solicited to seek happiness, (if not in grand, yet) in beautiful houses, in elegant furniture, in curious pictures, in delightful gardens! Perhaps in that trifle of all trifles,—rich or gay apparel. Yea, in every new thing, little or great, which fashion, the mistress of fools, recommends. How are rich men, of a more elevated turn of mind, tempted to seek happiness, as their various tastes lead, in poetry, history, music, philosophy, or curious arts and sciences! Now although it is certain all these have their use, and therefore may be innocently pursued, yet the seeking happiness in any of them, instead of God, is manifest idolatry: and therefore, were it only on this account, that riches furnish him with the means of indulging all these desires, it might well be asked, "Is not the life of a rich man above all others, a temptation upon earth?"

4 What temptation likewise must every rich man have, to seek happiness in "the pride of life!" I do not conceive the apostle to mean thereby pomp, or state, or equipage; so much as "the honour that cometh of men," whether it be deserved or not. A rich man is sure to meet with this: it is a snare he cannot escape. The whole city of London uses the words, *rich* and *good*, as equivalent terms. "Yes," say they, "he is a good man; he is worth a hundred thousand pounds." And indeed every where, "if thou doest well unto thyself," if thou increasest in goods, "men will speak well of thee." All the world is agreed,

"A thousand pounds supplies
The want of twenty thousand qualities."

And who can bear general applause, without being puffed up? without being insensibly induced to think of himself "more highly than he ought to think?"

5. How is it possible that a rich man should escape pride, were it only on this account; that his situation necessarily occasions praise to flow in upon him from every quarter? For praise is generally poison to the soul, and the more pleasing, the more fatal; particularly when it is undeserved: so that well might our poet say;

"Parent of evil, bane of honest deeds,
Pernicious flattery! Thy destructive seeds,
In an ill hour, and by a fatal hand,
Sadly diffused o'er virtue's gleby land,
With rising pride amid the corn appear,
And check the hope and promise of the year!"

And not only praise, whether deserved or undeserved, but every thing about him tends to inspire and increase pride. His noble house, his elegant furniture, his well chosen pictures, his fine horses, his equipage, his very dress, yea, even "the embroidery plastered on his tail;" all these will be matter of commendation to some or other of his guests; and so have an almost irresistible tendency to make him think himself a better man, than those who have not these advantages.

6. How naturally, likewise, do riches feed and increase the self will which is born in every child of man! As not only his domestic servants, and immediate dependants, are governed implicitly by his will, finding their account therein; but also most of his neighbours and acquaintance study to oblige him in all things: so his will, being continually indulged, will, of course, be continually strengthened; till at length he will be ill able to submit to the will either of God or men.

7. Such a tendency have riches to beget and nourish every temper that is contrary to the love of God. And they have equal tendency to feed every passion and temper that is contrary to the love of our neighbour: contempt, for instance, particularly of inferiors, than which nothing is more contrary to love;—resentment, of any real or supposed offence: perhaps even revenge; although God claims this as his own peculiar prerogative;—at least anger; for it immediately rises in the mind of a rich man, "What! to use *me* thus! Nay, but he shall soon know better: I am now able to do myself justice!"

8. Nearly related to anger, if not rather a species of it, are fretfulness and peevishness. But are the rich more assaulted by these than the poor? All experience shows that they are: one remarkable instance I was a witness of many years ago. A gentleman of large fortune, while we were seriously conversing, ordered a servant to throw some coals on the fire: a puff of smoke came out: he threw himself back in his chair, and cried out, "Oh Mr. Wesley, these are the crosses which I meet with every day!" I could not help asking, "Pray, sir John, are these the heaviest crosses you meet with?" Surely these crosses would not have fretted him so much, if he had had fifty, instead of five thousand pounds a year!

9. But it would not be strange, if rich men were in general void of all good dispositions, and an easy prey to all evil ones; since so few of them pay any regard to that solemn declaration of our Lord, without

observing which we cannot be his disciples: "And he said unto them all,"—the whole multitude, not unto his apostles only,—"if any man will come after me,"—will be a real Christian,—"let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me," Luke ix, 23. Oh how hard a saying is this, to those that are "at ease in the midst of their possessions!" Yet the Scripture cannot be broken. Therefore, unless a man do "deny himself" every pleasure which does not prepare him for taking pleasure in God, "and take up his cross daily,"—obey every command of God, however grievous to flesh and blood,—he cannot be a disciple of Christ; he cannot "enter into the kingdom of God."

10. Touching this important point, of denying ourselves, and taking up our cross daily, let us appeal to matter of fact: let us appeal to every man's conscience in the sight of God. How many rich men are there among the Methodists, (observe, there was not one, when they were first joined together,) who actually do "deny themselves and take up their cross daily?" Who resolutely abstain from every pleasure, either of sense, or imagination, unless they know by experience, that it prepares them for taking pleasure in God? Who declines no cross, no labour or pain, which lies in the way of his duty? Who of you that are now rich, deny yourselves just as you did when you were poor? Who as willingly endure labour or pain now, as you did when you were not worth five pounds? Come to particulars. Do you fast now as often as you did then? Do you rise as early in the morning? Do you endure cold or heat, wind or rain, as cheerfully as ever? See one reason, among many, why so few increase in goods, without decreasing in grace! Because they no longer deny themselves and take up their daily cross. They no longer, alas! endure hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ!

11. "Go to now, ye rich men! Weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you:" that must come upon you in a few days, unless prevented by a deep and entire change! "The canker of your gold and silver" will be "a testimony against you," and will "eat your flesh as fire!" Oh how pitiable is your condition! And who is able to help you? You need more plain dealing than any men in the world, and you meet with less. For how few dare speak as plain to *you*, as they would do to one of your servants! No man living, that either hopes to gain any thing by your favour, or fears to lose any thing by your displeasure. Oh that God would give me acceptable words, and cause them to sink deep into your hearts! Many of you have known me long, well nigh from your infancy: you have frequently helped me, when I stood in need. May I not say, you loved me? But now the time of our parting is at hand: my feet are just stumbling upon the dark mountains. I would leave one word with you, before I go hence; and you may remember it when I am no more seen.

12. Oh let your heart be whole with God! Seek your happiness in him and him alone. Beware that you cleave not to the dust! "This earth is not your place." See that you use this world as not abusing it: *use* the world, and *enjoy* God. Sit as loose to all things here below, as if you were a poor beggar. Be a good steward of the manifold gifts of God; that when you are called to give an account of your stewardship, he may say, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!"

SERMON CXIV.—*On what is Man?*

"What is man?" Psalm viii, 4.

1. NAY, what am I? With God's assistance I would consider myself. Here is a curious machine, "fearfully and wonderfully made." It is a little portion of *earth*, the particles of which cohering, I know not how, lengthen into innumerable fibres, a thousand times finer than hairs. These, crossing each other in all directions, are strangely wrought into membranes; and these membranes are as strangely wrought into arteries, veins, nerves, and glands; all of which contain various fluids, constantly circulating through the whole machine.

2. In order to the continuance of this circulation, a considerable quantity of air is necessary. And this is continually taken into the habit, by an engine fitted for that very purpose. But as a particle of ethereal *fire* is connected with every particle of air, (and a particle of water too,) so both air, water, and fire, are received into the lungs together; where the fire is separated from the air and water, both of which are continually thrown out; while the fire, extracted from them, is received into, and mingled with the blood. Thus the human body is composed of all the four elements, duly proportioned and mixed together: the last of which constitutes the vital flame, whence flows the animal heat.

3. Let me consider this yet a little farther. Is not the primary use of the lungs to administer fire to the body, which is continually extracted from the air, by that curious fire pump? By inspiration, it takes in the air, water, and fire together. In its numerous cells, (commonly called air vessels,) it detaches the fire from the air and water. This then mixes with the blood; as every air vessel has a blood vessel connected with it: and as soon as the fire is extracted from it, the air and water are thrown out by expiration.

4. Without this spring of life, this vital fire, there could be no circulation of the blood: consequently, no motion of any of the fluids; of the nervous fluid in particular: (if it be not rather, as is highly probable this very fire we are speaking of.) Therefore there could not be any sensation, nor any muscular motion. I say, there could be no circulation; for the cause usually assigned for this, namely, the force of the heart, is altogether inadequate to the supposed effect. No one supposes the force of the heart, in a strong man, to be more than equal to the weight of three thousand pounds. Whereas it would require a force equal to the weight of a hundred thousand pounds, to propel the blood from the heart through all the arteries. This can only be effected by the ethereal fire contained in the blood itself, assisted by the elastic force of the arteries through which it circulates.

5. But besides this strange compound of the four elements, earth, water, air, and fire; I find something in me of a quite different nature, nothing akin to any of these. I find something in me that *thinks*; which neither earth, water, air, fire, nor any mixture of them, can possibly do: something which sees, and hears, and smells, and tastes, and feels; all which are so many modes of thinking. It goes farther: having perceived objects by any of these senses, it forms inward ideas of them. It *judges* concerning them; it sees whether they agree or

disagree with each other. It *reasons* concerning them; that is, infers one proposition from another. It reflects upon its own operations; it is endued with imagination and memory; and any of its operations, judgment in particular, may be subdivided into many others.

6. But by what means shall I learn in what part of my body this thinking principle is lodged? Some eminent men have affirmed, that it is "all in all, and all in every part." But I learn nothing from this: they seem to be words that have no determinate meaning. Let us then appeal, in the best manner we can, to our own experience. From this I learn, that this thinking principle is not lodged in my hands, or feet, or legs, or arms. It is not lodged in the trunk of my body. Any one may be assured of this by a little reflection. I cannot conceive that it is situated in my bones, or in any part of my flesh. So far as I can judge, it seems to be situated in some part of my head; but whether in the pineal gland, or any part of the brain, I am not able to determine.

7. But farther: This inward principle, wherever it is lodged, is capable not only of thinking, but likewise of love, hatred, joy, sorrow, desire, fear, hope, &c, and a whole train of other inward emotions, which are commonly called passions or affections. They are styled, by a general appellation, the will; and are mixed and diversified a thousand ways. And they seem to be the only spring of action in that inward principle I call the soul.

8. But what is my soul? It is an important question, and not easy to be resolved.

> "Hear'st thou submissive, but a lowly birth?
> Some separate particles of finer earth?
> A plain effect which nature must beget,
> As motion dictates, and as atoms meet?"

I cannot in any wise believe this. My reason recoils at it. I cannot reconcile myself to the thought, that the soul is either earth, water, or fire; or a composition of all of them put together; were it only for this plain reason:—all these, whether separate or compounded in any possible way, are purely *passive* still. None of them has the least power of self motion: none of them can move itself. "But (says one) does not that ship move?" Yes, but not of itself; it is moved by the water on which it swims. "But then the water moves?" True; but the water is moved by the wind, the current of air. "But the air moves?" It is moved by the ethereal fire, which is attached to every particle of it; and this fire itself is moved by the Almighty Spirit, the source of all the motion in the universe. But my soul has from him an inward principle of motion, whereby it governs at pleasure every part of the body.

9. It governs every motion of the body; only with this exception, which is a marvellous instance of the wise and gracious providence of the great Creator: there are some motions of the body, which are absolutely necessary for the continuance of life: such as the dilation and contraction of the lungs; the systole and diastole of the heart; the pulsation of the arteries; and the circulation of the blood. These are not governed by me at pleasure: they do not wait the direction of my will. And it is well they do not. It is highly proper, that all the vital motions should be involuntary; going on, whether we advert to them or not. Were it otherwise, grievous inconveniences might follow. A

man might put an end to his own life whenever he pleased, by suspending the motion of his heart, or of his lungs; or he might lose his life by mere inattention; by not remembering, not adverting to the circulation of his blood. But these vital motions being excepted, I direct the motion of my whole body. By a single act of my will, I put my head, eyes, hands, or any part of my body into motion: although I no more comprehend how I do this, than I can comprehend how the "Three that bear record in heaven are one."

10. But what am *I?* Unquestionably I am something distinct from my body. It seems evident that my body is not necessarily included therein. For when my body dies, I shall not die: I shall exist as really as I did before. And I cannot but believe, this self moving, thinking principle, with all its passions and affections, will continue to exist, although the body be mouldered into dust. Indeed at present this body is so intimately connected with the soul, that I seem to consist of both. In my present state of existence, I undoubtedly consist both of soul and body: and so I shall again, after the resurrection, to all eternity.

11. I am conscious to myself of one more property, commonly called liberty. This is very frequently confounded with the will; but is of a very different nature. Neither is it a property of the will, but a distinct property of the soul; capable of being exerted with regard to all the faculties of the soul, as well as all the motions of the body. It is a power of self determination; which although it does not extend to all our thoughts and imaginations, yet extends to our words and actions in general, and not with many exceptions. I am full as certain of this, that I am free, with respect to these, to speak or not to speak, to act or not to act, to do this or the contrary, as I am of my own existence. I have not only what is termed, a "liberty of contradiction;" a power to do or not to do; but what is termed a "liberty of contrariety:" a power to act one way, or the contrary. To deny this would be to deny the constant experience of all human kind. Every one feels that he has an inherent power, to move this or that part of his body, to move it or not, and to move this way or the contrary, just as he pleases. I can, as I choose, (and so can every one that is born of a woman,) open or shut my eyes; speak, or be silent; rise, or sit down; stretch out my hand, or draw it in; and use any of my limbs according to my pleasure, as well as my whole body. And although I have not an absolute power over my own mind, because of the corruption of my own nature; yet, through the grace of God assisting me, I have a power to choose and do good, as well as evil, I am free to choose whom I will serve; and if I choose the better part, to continue therein even unto death.

12. "But tell me frighted nature, What is death?
Blood only stopt, and interrupted breath?
The utmost limit of a narrow span?
And end of motion which with life began?"

Death is properly the separation of the soul from the body. Of this we are certain. But we are not certain (at least in many cases) of the time when this separation is made. Is it when respiration ceases? according to the well known maxim; *nullus spiritus, nulla vita:* "where there is no breath, there is no life." Nay, we cannot absolutely affirm this: for many instances have been known, of those whose breath was

totally lost, and yet their lives have been recovered. Is it when the heart no longer beats? or when the circulation of the blood ceases? Not so. For the heart may beat anew; and the circulation of the blood, after it is quite interrupted, may begin again. Is the soul separated from the body, when the whole body is stiff and cold as a piece of ice? But there have been several instances lately, of persons who were thus cold and stiff, and had no symptoms of life remaining, who, nevertheless, upon proper application, recovered both life and health. Therefore we can say no more, than that death is the separation of the soul and body; but in many cases, God only can tell the moment of that separation.

13. But what we are much more concerned to know, and deeply to consider, is, the end of life. For what end is life bestowed upon the children of men? Why were we sent into the world? For one sole end, and for no other, to prepare for eternity. For this alone we live. For this, and no other purpose, is our life either given or continued. It pleased the all wise God, at the season which he saw best, to arise in the greatness of his strength, and create the heavens and the earth, and all things that are therein. Having prepared all things for him, "He created man in his own image, after his own likeness." And what was the end of his creation? It was one, and no other;—that he might know, and love, and enjoy, and serve his great Creator to all eternity.

14. But "man, being in honour continued not;" but became lower than even the beasts that perish. He wilfully and openly rebelled against God, and cast off his allegiance to the majesty of heaven. Hereby he instantly lost both the favour of God, and the image of God wherein he was created. As he was then incapable of obtaining happiness by the old, God established a new covenant with man; the terms of which were no longer, "Do this and live," but "Believe, and thou shalt be saved." But still the end of man is one and the same; only it stands on another foundation. For the plain tenor of it is, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, whom God hath given to be the propitiation for thy sins, and thou shalt be saved;" first, from the guilt of sin, having redemption through his blood; then from the power, which shall have no more dominion over thee; and then from the root of it, into the whole image of God. And being restored both to the favour and image of God, thou shalt know, love, and serve him to all eternity. So that still the end of his life, the life of every man born into the world, is to know, love, and serve his great Creator.

15. And let it be observed, as this is the end, so it is the whole and sole end, for which every man upon the face of the earth, for which every one of *you* were brought into the world, and endued with a living soul. Remember! You were born for nothing else. You live for nothing else. Your life is continued to you upon earth, for no other purpose than this, that you may know, love, and serve God on earth, and enjoy him to all eternity. Consider! You were not created to please your senses, to gratify your imagination, to gain money, or the praise of men; to seek happiness in any created good, in any thing under the sun. All this is "walking in a vain shadow;" it is leading a restless, miserable life, in order to a miserable eternity. On the contrary, you were created for this, and for no other purpose, by seeking and finding happiness in God on earth, to secure the glory of God in heaven. Therefore, let

your heart continually say, "This one thing I do,"—having one thing in view, remembering why I was born, and why I am continued in life,—"I press on to the mark." I aim at the one end of my being, God; even at "God in Christ reconciling the world to himself." He shall be my God for ever and ever, and my guide even unto death!

Bradford, May 2, 1788.

SERMON CXV.—*On the Discoveries of Faith.*

"Now faith is the evidence of things not seen," Heb. xi, 1.

1. For many ages it has been allowed by sensible men, *nihil est in intellectu quod non fuit prius in sensu:* that is, "there is nothing in the understanding which was not first perceived by some of the senses." All the knowledge which we naturally have, is originally derived from our senses. And therefore those who want any sense, cannot have the least knowledge or idea of the objects of that sense: as they that never had sight, have not the least knowledge or conception of light or colours. Some indeed have, of late years, endeavoured to prove, that we have innate ideas, not derived from any of the senses, but coeval with the understanding. But this point has been now thoroughly discussed, by men of the most eminent sense and learning. And it is agreed by all impartial persons that although some things are so plain and obvious, that we can very hardly avoid knowing them, as soon as we come to the use of our understanding; yet the knowledge even of those is not innate, but derived from some of our senses.

2. But there is a great difference between our senses considered as the avenues of our knowledge. Some of them have a very narrow sphere of action; some a more extensive one. By *feeling* we discern only those objects that touch some part of our body; and, consequently, this sense extends only to a small number of objects. Our senses of *taste* and *smell* (which some count species of *feeling*) extend to fewer still. But, on the other hand, our nobler sense of *hearing*, has an exceeding wide sphere of action; especially in the case of loud sounds, as thunder, the roaring of the sea, or the discharge of cannon: the last of which sounds has been frequently heard at the distance of near a hundred miles. Yet the space to which the sense of *hearing* itself extends is small, compared to that through which the *sight* extends. The *sight* takes in at one view, not only the most unbounded prospects on earth, but also the moon and the other planets, the sun, yea the fixed stars; though at such an immeasurable distance, that they appear no larger through our finest telescopes than they do to the naked eye.

3. But still none of our senses, no, not the sight itself, can reach beyond the bounds of this visible world. They supply us with such knowledge of the material world, as answers all the purposes of life. But as this was the design for which they were given, beyond this they cannot go. They furnish us with no information at all concerning the invisible world.

4. But the wise and gracious Governor of the worlds, both visible and invisible, has prepared a remedy for this defect. He hath appointed

faith to supply the defect of sense, to take us up where sense sets us down, and help us over the great gulf. Its office begins where that of sense ends. Sense is an evidence of things that are seen; of the visible, the material world, and the several parts of it. Faith, on the other hand, is the "evidence of things not seen;" of the invisible world; of all those invisible things which are revealed in the oracles of God. But, indeed, they reveal nothing, they are a mere dead letter, if they are "not mixed with faith in those that hear them."

5. In particular, faith is an evidence to me of the existence of that unseen thing, my own soul. Without this, I should be in utter uncertainty concerning it. I should be constrained to ask that melancholy question;

> "Hear'st thou submissive but a lowly birth?
> Some separate particles of finer earth?"

But by faith, I know it is an immortal spirit, made in the image of God; in his natural and moral image; "an incorruptible picture of the God of glory." By the same evidence I know that I am now fallen short of the glorious image of God; yea, that I, as well as all mankind, am "dead in trespasses and sins." So utterly dead, that "in me dwelleth no good thing;" that I am inclined to all evil, and totally unable to quicken my own soul.

6. By faith, I know, that besides the souls of men, there are other orders of spirits: yea, I believe that

> —"Millions of creatures walk the earth
> Unseen, whether we wake, or if we sleep."

These I term angels; and I believe part of them are holy and happy, and the other part wicked and miserable. I believe the former of these, the good angels, are continually sent of God, "to minister to the heirs of salvation;" who will be "equal to angels" by and by, although they are now a little inferior to them. I believe the latter, the evil angels, called in Scripture, devils, united under one head, (termed in Scripture, Satan; emphatically, the enemy, the adversary, both of God and man,) either range the upper regions; whence they are called "princes of the power of the air;" or, like him, walk about the earth as "roaring lions, seeking whom they may devour."

7. But I know by faith, that above all these, is the Lord Jehovah; he that is, that was, and that is to come; that is God from everlasting, and world without end: he that filleth heaven and earth; he that is infinite in power, in justice, in mercy, and holiness; he that created all things, visible and invisible, by the breath of his mouth, and still upholds them all, preserves them in being, "by the word of his power;" and that governs all things, that are in heaven above, in earth beneath, and under the earth. By faith I know, "there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and that these three are one;" that the Word, God the Son, "was made flesh," lived and died for our salvation, rose again, ascended into heaven, and now sitteth on the right hand of the Father. By faith I know, that the Holy Spirit is the giver of all spiritual life; of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; of holiness and happiness, by the restoration of that image of God, wherein we are created. Of all these things, faith is the evidence, the sole evidence, to the children of men.

8. And as the information which we receive from our senses, does not extend to the invisible world, so neither does it extend to (what is nearly related thereto) the eternal world. In spite of all the instruction which either the sight or any of the senses can afford,

> "The vast, the unbounded prospect lies before us;
> But clouds, alas! and darkness rest upon it."

Sense does not let in one ray of light, to discover "the secrets of the illimitable deep." This, the eternal world, commences at death, the death of every individual person. The moment the breath of man goeth forth, he is an inhabitant of eternity. Just then, time vanishes away, "like as a dream when one awaketh." And here again, faith supplies the place of sense, and gives us a view of things to come: at once it draws aside the veil which hangs between mortal and immortal beings. Faith discovers to us the souls of the righteous, immediately received by the holy angels, and carried by those ministering spirits into Abraham's bosom; into the delights of paradise, the garden of God, where the light of his countenance perpetually shines; where he converses, not only with his former relations, friends, and fellow soldiers, but with the saints of all nations and all ages, with the glorious dead of ancient days, with the noble army of martyrs, the apostles, the prophets, the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: yea, above all this, he shall be with Christ, in a manner that he could not be while he remained in the body.

9. It discovers, likewise, the souls of unholy men; seized the moment they depart from the quivering lips, by those ministers of vengeance, the evil angels, and dragged away to their own place. It is true, this is not the nethermost hell: they are not to be tormented there "before the time;" before the end of the world, when every one will receive his just recompense of reward. Till then they will probably be employed by their bad master, in advancing his infernal kingdom, and in doing all the mischief that lies in their power, to the poor, feeble children of men. But still, wherever they seek rest, they will find none. They carry with them their own hell, in the worm that never dieth: in a consciousness of guilt, and of the wrath of God, which continually drinks up their spirits; in diabolical, infernal tempers, which are essential misery; and in what they cannot shake off, no, not for an hour, any more than they can shake off their own being,—that "fearful looking for of fiery indignation, which will devour God's adversaries."

10. Moreover, faith opens another scene in the eternal world; namely, the coming of our Lord in the clouds of heaven, to "judge both the quick and the dead." It enables us to see the "great white throne coming down from heaven, and him that sitteth thereon, from whose face the heavens and the earth flee away, and there is found no place for them." We see "the dead, small and great, stand before God." We see "the books opened, and the dead judged, according to the things that are written in the books." We see the earth and the sea giving up their dead, and hell (that is, the invisible world) giving up the dead that were therein, and every one judged according to his works.

11. By faith we are also shown the immediate consequences of the general judgment. We see the execution of that happy sentence pronounced upon those on the right hand, "Come, ye blessed of my Father,

inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." After which the holy angels tune their harps, and sing, "Lift up your heads, oh ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, that the heirs of glory may come in!" And then shall they drink of the rivers of pleasure that are at God's right hand for evermore. We see, likewise, the execution of that dreadful sentence, pronounced upon those on the left hand, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." And then shall the ministers of divine vengeance plunge them into "the lake of fire burning with brimstone; where they have no rest day or night, but the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever."

12. But besides the invisible and the eternal world, which are not seen, which are discoverable only by faith, there is a whole system of things which are not seen, which cannot be discerned by any of our outward senses. I mean, the spiritual world, understanding thereby the kingdom of God in the soul of man. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard this; neither can it enter into the heart of man to conceive the things of" this interior kingdom, unless God revealed them by his Spirit. The Holy Spirit prepares us for his inward kingdom, by removing the veil from our heart, and enabling us to know ourselves as we are known of him; by "convincing us of sin," of our evil nature, our evil tempers, and our evil words and actions; all of which cannot but partake of the corruption of the heart from which they spring. He then convinces us of the desert of our sins; so that our mouth is stopped, and we are constrained to plead guilty before God. At the same time, we "receive the spirit of bondage unto fear;" fear of the wrath of God, fear of the punishment which we have deserved; and, above all, fear of death, lest it should consign us over to eternal death. Souls that are thus convinced, feel they are so fast in prison, that they cannot get forth. They feel themselves at once altogether sinful, altogether guilty, and altogether helpless. But all this conviction implies a species of faith; being "an evidence of things not seen." Nor indeed possible to be seen or known, till God reveals them unto us.

13. But still let it be carefully observed, (for it is a point of no small importance,) that this faith is only the faith of a servant, and not the faith of a son. Because this is a point which many do not clearly understand, I will endeavour to make it a little plainer. The faith of a servant implies a divine evidence of the invisible and the eternal world; yea, and an evidence of the spiritual world, so far as it can exist without living experience. Whoever has attained this, the faith of a servant, "feareth God, and escheweth evil;" or, as it is expressed by St. Peter, "feareth God, and worketh righteousness." In consequence of which, he is, in a degree, as the apostle observes, "accepted with him." Elsewhere he is described in those words: "He that feareth God, and keepeth his commandments." Even one who has gone thus far in religion, who obeys God out of fear, is not in any wise to be despised; seeing "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Nevertheless, he should be exhorted not to stop there; not to rest till he attains the adoption of sons; till he obeys him out of love, which is the privilege of all the children of God.

14. Exhort him to press on, by all possible means, till he passes 'from faith to faith;" from the faith of a *servant* to the faith of a *son*;

from the spirit of bondage unto fear, to the spirit of childlike love: he will then have "Christ revealed in his heart," enabling him to testify, "The life that I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*:" the proper voice of a child of God. He will then be "born of God;" inwardly changed by the mighty power of God, from "an earthly, sensual, devilish mind, to the mind which was in Christ Jesus." He will experience what St. Paul means, by those remarkable words to the Galatians: "Ye are the sons of God by faith; and because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." "He that believeth," as a son, (as St. John observes,) "hath the witness in himself." "The Spirit itself witnesses with his spirit, that he is a child of God." "The love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto him."

15. But many doubts and fears may still remain, even in a child of God, while he is weak in faith; while he is in the number of those whom St. Paul terms "babes in Christ." But when his faith is strengthened, when he receives faith's abiding impression, realizing things to come; when he has received the abiding witness of the Spirit, doubts and fears vanish away. He then enjoys the plerophory, or "full assurance of faith;" excluding all doubt, and all "fear that hath torment." To those whom he styles *young* men, St. John says, "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one." These, the apostle observes in the other verse, had "the word of God abiding in them." It may not improbably mean, the pardoning word; the word which spake all their sins forgiven: in consequence of which, they have the consciousness of the Divine favour, without any intermission.

16. To these more especially we may apply the exhortation of the apostle Paul, "Leaving the first principles of the doctrine of Christ," (namely, repentance and faith,) "let us go on unto perfection." But in what sense are we to leave those principles? Not absolutely; for we are to retain both one and the other, the knowledge of ourselves, and the knowledge of God, unto our lives' end, but only comparatively: not fixing, as we did at first, our whole attention upon them; thinking and talking perpetually of nothing else, but either repentance or faith. But what is the perfection here spoken of? It is not only a deliverance from doubts and fears, but from sin; from all inward, as well as outward sin: from evil desires, and evil tempers, as well as from evil words and works. Yea, and it is not only a negative blessing, a deliverance from all evil dispositions, implied in that expression, "I will circumcise thy heart;" but a positive one likewise; even the planting all good dispositions in their place; clearly implied in that other expression; "To love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul."

17. These are they to whom the apostle John gives the venerable title of *fathers*, who "have known him that is from the beginning;" the eternal three-one God. One of these expresses himself thus: "I bear about with me an experimental verity and a plenitude of the presence of the ever blessed Trinity." And those who are fathers in Christ, generally, though I believe, not always, enjoy the plerophory or "full assurance of hope:" having no more doubt of reigning with him in glory, than if they already saw him coming in the clouds of heaven

But this does not prevent their continually increasing in the knowledge and love of God. While they "rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in every thing give thanks;" they pray in particular, that they may never cease to watch, to deny themselves, to take up their cross daily, to fight the good fight of faith, and against the world, the devil, and their own manifold infirmities; till they are "able to comprehend with all saints, what is the length, and breadth, and height, and depth, and to know that love of Christ which passeth knowledge;" yea, to be "filled with all the fulness of God."

Yarm, June 11, 1788.

SERMON CXVI.—*On the Omnipresence of God.*

"Do I not fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord," Jer. xxiii, 24.

1. How strongly and beautifully do these words express the omnipresence of God! And can there be, in the whole compass of nature, a more sublime subject? Can there be any more worthy the consideration of every rational creature? Is there any more necessary to be considered, and to be understood, so far as our poor faculties will admit? How many excellent purposes may it answer? What deep instruction may it convey to all the children of men? And more directly to the children of God?

2. How is it then, that so little has been wrote on so sublime and useful a subject? It is true, that some of our most eminent writers have occasionally touched upon it; and have several strong and beautiful reflections, which were naturally suggested by it. But which of them has published a regular treatise, or so much as a sermon, upon the head? Perhaps many were conscious of their inability to do justice to so vast a subject. It is possible, there may some such lie hid, in the voluminous writings of the last century. But if they are hid, even in their own country, if they are buried in oblivion, it is the same, for any use they are of, as if they had never been wrote.

3. What seems to be wanting still, for general use, is a plain discourse on the omnipresence, or ubiquity of God. First, in some manner explaining and proving that glorious truth, God is in this, and every place; and then applying it to the consciences of all thinking men, in a few practical inferences.

I. 1. Accordingly, I will endeavour, by the assistance of his Spirit, first, a little to explain the omnipresence of God; to show how we are to understand this glorious truth, God is in this, and every place. The psalmist, you may remember, speaks strongly and beautifully upon it, in the hundred and thirty-ninth psalm; observing, in the most exact order, first, God is in this place; and then, God is in every place. He observes, first, "Thou art about my bed, and about my path, and spiest out all my ways," verse 3. "Thou hast fashioned me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me," verse 5: although the *manner* thereof he could not explain: *how* it was he could not tell. "Such knowledge," says he, "is too wonderful for me: I cannot attain unto it," verse 6. He next observes, in the most lively and affecting manner, that God is in every place. "Whither shall I go then from thy Spirit, or whither shall I go from thy presence? If I climb up into heaven,

thou art there: if I go down to hell, thou art there also," verses 7, 8. If I could ascend, speaking after the manner of men, to the highest part of the universe, or could I descend to the lowest point, thou art alike present both in one and the other. "If I should take the wings of the morning, and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea: even there thy hand would lead me;" thy power and thy presence would be before me, "and thy right hand would hold me;" seeing thou art equally in the length and breadth, and in the height and depth of the universe. Indeed, thy presence and knowledge not only reach the utmost bounds of creation; but

"Thine omnipresent sight,
Even to the pathless realms extends
Of uncreated night."

In a word, there is no point of space, whether within or without the bounds of creation, where God is not.

2. Indeed, this subject is far too vast to be comprehended by the narrow limits of human understanding. We can only say, the great God, the eternal, the almighty Spirit, is as unbounded in his presence, as in his duration and power. In condescension, indeed, to our weak understanding, he is said to dwell in heaven: but, strictly speaking, the heaven of heavens cannot contain him; but he is in every part of his dominion. The universal God dwelleth in universal space: so that we may say,

"Hail, Father! whose creating call,
Unnumber'd worlds attend!
Jehovah, comprehending all,
Whom none can comprehend!"

3. If we may dare attempt the illustrating this a little farther: what is the space occupied by a grain of sand, compared to that space which is occupied by the starry heavens? It is as a cipher; it is nothing; it vanishes away in the comparison. What is it then to the whole expanse of space, to which the whole creation is infinitely less than a grain of sand! And yet this space, to which the whole creation bears no proportion at all, is infinitely less in comparison of the great God, than a grain of sand, yea, a millionth part of it, is to that whole space.

II. 1. This seems to be the plain meaning of those solemn words, which God speaks of himself: "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" And these sufficiently prove his omnipresence: which may be farther proved from this consideration: God acts every where; and, therefore, is every where: for it is an utter impossibility that any being, created or uncreated should work where it is not. God acts in heaven, in earth, and under the earth, throughout the whole compass of his creation; by sustaining all things, without which every thing would in an instant sink into its primitive nothing; by governing all, every moment superintending every thing that he has made; strongly and sweetly influencing all, and yet without destroying the liberty of his rational creatures. The very heathens acknowledged, that the great God governs the large and conspicuous parts of the universe; that he regulates the motions of the heavenly bodies, of the sun, moon, and stars; that he is

Totam
Mens agitans molem, et magno se corpore miscens:
"The all informing soul,
That fills, pervades, and actuates the whole."

But they had no conception of his having a regard to the least things as well as the greatest; of his presiding over all that he has made, and governing atoms as well as worlds. This we could not have known, unless it had pleased God to reveal it unto us himself. Had he not himself told us so, we should not have dared to think that "not a sparrow falleth to the ground, without the will of our Father which is in heaven;" and much less affirm, that "even the very hairs of our head are all numbered!"

2. This comfortable truth, that "God filleth heaven and earth," we learn also from the psalmist above recited: "If I climb up into heaven, thou art there; if I go down to hell, thou art there also. If I take the wings of the morning, and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there thy hand shall lead me." The plain meaning is, if I remove to any distance whatever, thou art there; thou still besettest me, and layest thine hand upon me. Let me flee to any conceivable or inconceivable distance; above, beneath, or on any side; it makes no difference; thou art still equally there: in thee I still "live, and move, and have my being."

3. And where no creature is, still God is there. The presence or absence of any or all creatures, makes no difference with regard to him. He is equally in all, or without all. Many have been the disputes among philosophers, whether there be any such thing as empty space in the universe; and it is now generally supposed, that all space is full. Perhaps it cannot be proved, that all space is filled with matter. But the heathen himself will bear us witness, *Jovis omnia plena:* "All things are full of God." Yea, and whatever space exists beyond the bounds of creation, (for creation must have bounds, seeing nothing is boundless, nothing can be, but the great Creator,) even that space cannot exclude him who fills the heaven and the earth.

4. Just equivalent to this is the expression of the apostle, Eph. ii, 23, (not as some have strangely supposed, concerning the church, but concerning the head of it:) "The fulness of him that filleth all in all;" τα παντα εν πασιν: literally translated, *all things in all things:* the strongest expression of universality which can possibly be conceived. It necessarily includes the least and the greatest of all things that exist. So that if any expression could be stronger, it would be stronger than even that, the "filling heaven and earth."

5. Indeed, this very expression, "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" (the question being equal to the strongest affirmation,) implies the clearest assertion of God's being present every where, and filling all space: for it is well known, the Hebrew phrase, "heaven and earth," includes the whole universe; the whole extent of space, created or uncreated, and all that is therein.

6. Nay, and we cannot believe the omnipotence of God, unless we believe his omnipresence, for seeing as was observed before, nothing can act where it is not; if there were any space where God was not present, he would not be able to do any thing there. Therefore, to deny the omnipresence of God, implies, likewise, the denial of his omnipotence. To set bounds to the one is, undoubtedly, to set bounds to the other also.

7. Indeed, wherever we suppose him not to be, there we suppose all his attributes to be in vain. He cannot exercise there, either his jus-

tice, or mercy; either his power, or wisdom. In that extra mundane space, (so to speak,) where we suppose God not to be present, we must, of course, suppose him to have no duration; but, as it is supposed to be beyond the bounds of the creation, so it is beyond the bounds of the Creator's power. Such is the blasphemous absurdity, which is implied in this supposition!

8. But to all that is or can be said of the omnipresence of God, the world has one grand objection: they cannot see him. And this is really at the root of all their other objections. This our blessed Lord observed long ago: "Whom the world cannot receive, because they see him not." But is it not easy to reply, "Can you see the wind?" You cannot. But do you, therefore, deny its existence, or its presence? You say, No: for I can perceive it by my other senses. "But by which of your senses do you perceive your soul?" Surely you do not deny either the existence or the presence of this! And yet it is not the object of your sight, or of any of your other senses. Suffice it then to consider, That God is a spirit, as is your soul also. Consequently, "him no man hath seen, or can see," with eyes of flesh and blood.

III. 1. But allowing that God is here, as in every place, that he is "about our bed, and about our path," that he "besets us behind and before, and lays his hand upon us;" what inference should we draw from hence? What use should we make of this awful consideration? Is it not meet and right to humble ourselves before the eyes of his majesty? Should we not labour continually to acknowledge his presence, "with reverence and godly fear?" Not, indeed, with the fear of devils, that believe and tremble: but with the fear of angels; with something similar to that which is felt by the inhabitants of heaven, when

> "Dark with excessive bright his skirts appear,
> Yet dazzle heaven, that brightest seraphim
> Approach not, but with both wings veil their eyes."

2. Secondly, If you believe that God is about your bed, and about your path, and spieth out all your ways, then take care not to do the least thing, not to speak the least word, not to indulge the least thought, which you have reason to think would offend him. Suppose that a messenger of God, an angel, to be now standing at your right hand, and fixing his eyes upon you; would you not take care to abstain from every word or action that you knew would offend him? Yea, suppose one of your mortal fellow servants, suppose only a holy man, stood by you, would not you be extremely cautious how you conducted yourself, both in word and action? How much more cautious ought you to be, when you know, that not a holy man, not an angel of God, but God himself, the Holy One "that inhabiteth eternity," is inspecting your heart, your tongue, your hand, every moment; and that he himself will surely bring you into judgment, for all you think, and speak, and act, under the sun!

3. In particular: if there is not a word in your tongue, not a syllable you speak, but he "knoweth it altogether;" how exact should you be in "setting a watch before your mouth, and in keeping the door of your lips!" How wary does it behove you to be in all your conversation; being forewarned by your Judge, that, "by your words you shall be justified, or by your words you shall be condemned!" How cautious,

lest "any corrupt communication," any uncharitable, yea, or unprofitable discourse, should "proceed out of your mouth;" instead of, "that which is good to the use of edifying, and meet to minister grace to the hearers!"

4. Yea, if God sees our hearts, as well as our hands, and in all places; if he understandeth our thoughts, long before they are clothed with words; how earnestly should we urge that petition, "Search me, oh Lord, and prove me; try out my reins and my heart; look well if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!" How needful is it to work together with him, in "keeping our hearts with all diligence," till he hath "cast down imaginations," evil reasonings, "and every thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and brought into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ!"

5. On the other hand, if you are already listed under the great Captain of your salvation, seeing you are continually under the eye of your Captain, how zealous and active should you be, to "fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life;" "to endure hardship, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ;" to use all diligence, to "war a good warfare," and to do whatever is acceptable in his sight! How studious should you be to approve all your ways to his all seeing eyes; that he may say to your hearts, what he will proclaim aloud in the great assembly of men and angels, "Well done, good and faithful servants!"

6. In order to attain these glorious ends, spare no pains to preserve always a deep, a continual, a lively and a joyful sense of his gracious presence. Never forget his comprehensive word to the great Father of the faithful: "I am the Almighty [rather, the All Sufficient] God; walk before me, and be thou perfect!" Cheerfully expect that he, before whom you stand, will ever guide you with his eye, will support you by his guardian hand, will keep you from all evil; and, "when you have suffered a while, will make you perfect, will stablish, strengthen, and settle you;" and then "preserve you unblamable, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ!"

Portsmouth, August 12, 1788.

SERMON CXVII.—*The Rich Man and Lazarus.*

"If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead," Luke xvi, 31.

1. How strange a paradox is this! How contrary to the common apprehension of men! Who is so confirmed in unbelief, as not to think, "If one came to me from the dead, I should be effectually persuaded to repent?" But this passage affords us a more strange saying, ver. 13: "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." "No! Why not? Why cannot we serve both?" will a true servant of mammon say. Accordingly, the Pharisees, who supposed they served God, and did cordially serve mammon, *derided him*, ἐξεμυκτηριζον: a word expressive of the deepest contempt. But he said, verse 15, "Ye are they who justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: and that which is highly esteemed among men, is [very commonly] an abomination before God:"

a terrible proof of which our Lord subjoins in the remaining part of the chapter.

2. But is the subsequent account merely a parable, or a real history? It has been believed by many, and roundly asserted, to be a mere parable; because of one or two circumstances therein, which are not easy to be accounted for. In particular, it is hard to conceive, how a person in hell could hold conversation with one in paradise. But, admitting we cannot account for this, will it overbalance an express assertion of our Lord? "There was," says our Lord, "a certain rich man,"—Was there not? Did such a man never exist? "And there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus."—Was there, or was there not? Is it not bold enough, positively to deny what our blessed Lord positively affirms? Therefore, we cannot reasonably doubt, but the whole narration, with all its circumstances, is exactly true. And Theophylact (one of the ancient commentators on the Scriptures) observes upon the text: "That, according to the tradition of the Jews, Lazarus lived at Jerusalem."

I purpose, with God's assistance, first, To explain this history: secondly, To apply it: and, thirdly, To prove the truth of that weighty sentence with which it is concluded; namely, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

I. 1. And, first, I will endeavour, with God's assistance, to explain this history. "There was a certain rich man:" and, doubtless, on that very account, highly esteemed among men.—"Who was clothed in purple and fine linen:" and, consequently, esteemed the more highly, both as appearing suitably to his fortune, and as an encourager of trade. "And fared sumptuously every day." Here was another reason for his being "highly esteemed,"—his hospitality and generosity, both by those who frequently sat at his table, and the tradesmen that furnished it.

2. "And there was a certain beggar;" one in the lowest line of human infamy; "named Lazarus," according to the Greek termination; in Hebrew, Eleazar. From his name we may gather, that he was of no mean family, although this branch of it was, at present, so reduced. It is probable, he was well known in the city: and it was no scandal to him to be named.—"Who was laid at his gate;" although no pleasing spectacle; so that one might wonder he was suffered to lie there;—"full of sores;" of running ulcers;—"and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table." So the complicated affliction of poverty, pain, and want of bread, lay upon him at once! But it does not appear that any creature took the least notice of the despicable wretch! Only "the dogs came and licked his sores:" All the comfort which this world afforded him!

3. But see the change! "The beggar died:" here ended poverty and pain:—"and was carried by angels;" nobler servants than any that attended the rich man;—"into Abraham's bosom:" so the Jews commonly termed what our blessed Lord styles paradise; the place "where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest;" the receptacle of holy souls, from death to the resurrection. It is, indeed, very generally supposed, that the souls of good men, as soon as they are discharged from the body, go directly to heaven; but this opinion has not the least foundation in the oracles of God: on the contrary, our Lord says to Mary, after the resurrection, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father," in heaven. But he had been

in paradise, according to his promise to the penitent thief: "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Hence, it is plain, that paradise is not heaven. It is, indeed, (if we may be allowed the expression,) the anti-chamber of heaven, where the souls of the righteous remain, till, after the general judgment, they are received into glory.

4. But see the scene change again! "The rich man also died."—What! must rich men also die? Must they fall "like one of the people!" Is there no help? A rich man in London, some years ago, when the physician told him, "He must die," gnashed his teeth, and clenched his fist, and cried out vehemently, "God, God, I won't die!" But he died with the very words in his mouth.—"And was buried;" doubtless with pomp enough, suitably to his quality: although we do not find that there was then, in all the world, that exquisite instance of human folly, that senseless, cruel mockery of a poor putrefying carcass, what we term *lying in state!*

5. "And, in hell he lifted up his eyes."—Oh, what a change! How is the mighty fallen! But the word which is here rendered *hell*, does not always mean, the place of the damned. It is, literally, *the invisible world;* and is of very wide extent, including the receptacle of separate spirits, whether good or bad. But here it evidently means, that region of hades where the souls of wicked men reside, as appears from the following words: "being in torment:"—in order, say some, "to atone for the sins committed while in the body, as well as to purify the soul from all its inherent sin." Just so, the eminent heathen poet, near two thousand years ago:

"Necesse est
Multa diu concreta modis inolescere miris,
Ergo exercentur pœnis:
Aliæ panduntur inanes
Suspensæ ad ventos: aliis sub gurgite vasto
Infectum eluitur scelus, aut exuritur igni."

See the near resemblance between the ancient and the modern purgatory! Only in the ancient, the heathen purgatory, both fire, water, and air, were employed in expiating sin, and purifying the soul; whereas, in the mystic purgatory, fire alone is supposed sufficient, both to purge and expiate. Vain hope! No suffering, but that of Christ, has any power to expiate sin; and no fire, but that of love, can purify the soul, either in time or in eternity.

6. "He seeth Abraham afar off."—Far, indeed! As far as from hell to paradise! Perhaps, "ten fold the length of this terrene." But how could this be? I cannot tell: but it is by no means incredible. For who knows, "how far an angel kens?" Or a spirit divested of flesh and blood?—"And Lazarus in his bosom." It is well known, that, in the ancient feasts among the Jews, as well as the Romans, the guests did not sit down at the table, as it is now the custom to do; but lay on couches, each having a pillow at his left side, on which he supported his elbow; and he that sat next him, on the right side, was said to lie in his bosom. It was in this sense that the apostle John lay in his Master's bosom. Accordingly the expression of Lazarus lying in Abraham's bosom, implies, that he was in the highest place of honour and happiness.

7. "And he cried, and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me."—Thou fool, what can Abraham do? What can any creature, yea, all

the creation do, to break the bars of the bottomless pit? Whoever would escape from the place of torment, let him cry to God, the Father of mercy! Nay, but the time is past! Justice now takes place, and rejoices over mercy!—"And send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame!" How exceeding modest a request is this! He does not say, "That he may take me out of this flame." He does not ask, "That he may bring me a cup of water, or as much as he might hold in the palm of his hand." But barely, "That he may dip (were it but) the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue." No! It cannot be! No mercy can enter within the shades of hell!

8. "But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented." Perhaps these words may supply us with an answer to an important question: How came this rich man to be in hell? It does not appear that he was a wicked man, in the common sense of the word: that he was a drunkard, a common swearer, a sabbath breaker, or that he lived in any known sin. It is probable he was a Pharisee; and, as such, was, in all the outward parts of religion, blameless. How then did he come into "the place of torment?" If there was no other reason to be assigned, there is a sufficient one implied in those words: ("He that hath ears to hear, let him hear!") "Thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things:"—the things which thou hadst chosen for thy happiness. Thou hadst set thy affection on things beneath. And thou hadst thy reward. Thou didst receive the portion which thou hadst chosen, and canst have no portion above. "And likewise Lazarus evil things." Not *his* evil things; for he did not choose them. But they were chosen for him by the wise providence of God: and now "he is comforted, while thou art tormented."

9. "But, beside all this, there is a great gulf fixed:"—a great chasm, a vast vacuity. Can any tell us, what this is? What is the nature, what are the bounds of it? Nay, none of the children of men; none but an inhabitant of the invisible world.—"So that they who would pass from hence to you, cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence." Undoubtedly, a disembodied spirit could pass through any space whatever. But the will of God, determining that none should go across that gulf, is a bound which no creature can pass.

10. Then he said, "I pray thee, therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house; for I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment," ver. 27, 28. Two entirely different motives have been assigned for this extraordinary request. Some ascribe it wholly to self love, to a fear of the bitter reproaches, which, he might easily suppose, his brethren would pour upon him, if, in consequence of his example, and perhaps advice, they came to the same place of torment. Others have imputed it to a nobler motive. They suppose, as the misery of the wicked will not be complete till the day of judgment, so neither will their wickedness. Consequently, they believe, that till that time, they may retain some sparks of natural affection; and they, not improbably, imagine, that this may have occasioned his desire to prevent their sharing his own torment.

11. "Abraham saith unto him, they have Moses and the prophets: let them hear them, ver. 29. And he said, Nay, father Abraham; but if one went to them from the dead, they will repent." Who would not be of the same opinion? Might not any one reasonably suppose, that a message, solemnly delivered by one that came from the dead, must have an irresistible force? Who would not think, I myself could not possibly withstand such a preacher of repentance?

II. This I conceive to be the meaning of the words. I will now endeavour, with the help of God, to apply them. And I beseech you, brethren, while I am doing this, "to suffer the word of exhortation." The more closely these things are applied to your souls, the more ye may profit thereby.

1. "There was a certain rich man:"—And it is no more sinful to be rich than to be poor. But it is dangerous beyond expression. Therefore, I remind all of you that are of this number, that have the conveniences of life, and something over, that ye walk upon slippery ground. Ye continually tread on snares and deaths. Ye are every moment on the verge of hell! "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for you to enter into the kingdom of heaven."—"Who was clothed in purple and fine linen." And some may have a plea for this. Our Lord mentions them that "dwell in kings' houses," as wearing *gorgeous*, that is splendid *apparel*, and does not blame them for it. But certainly this is no plea for any that do not dwell in kings' houses. Let all of them, therefore, beware how they follow his example, who is "lifting up his eyes in hell:" let us follow the advice of the apostle, being "adorned with good works, and with the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit."

2. "He fared sumptuously every day."—Reconcile this with religion who can. I know how plausibly the prophets of smooth things can talk in favour of hospitality; of making our friends welcome; of keeping a handsome table, to do honour to religion; of promoting trade, and the like. But God is not mocked: he will not be put off with such pretences as these. Whoever thou art that sharest in the sin of this rich man, were it no other than "faring sumptuously every day," thou shalt as surely be a sharer in his punishment except thou repent, as if thou wert already crying for a drop of water to cool thy tongue!

3. "And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, who was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table," ver. 20, 21. But it seems both the rich man and his guests were too *religious* to relieve *common beggars*. A sin of which pious Mr. H. earnestly warns his readers; and an admonition of the same kind, I have read on the gate of the good city of Winchester! I wish the gentleman who placed it there, had seen a little circumstance which occurred some years since. At Epworth, in Lincolnshire, the town where I was born, a beggar came to a house in the market place, and begged a morsel of bread, saying "she was very hungry." The master bid her begone, for a lazy jade. She called at a second, and begged a little small beer, saying, "she was very thirsty." She had much the same answer. At a third door, she begged a little water; saying, "she was very faint." But this man also was too conscientious to encourage common beggars. The boys, seeing a ragged creature turned from door to door, began to pelt her with snow balls

She looked up, lay down, and died! Would you wish to be the man, who refused that poor wretch a morsel of bread, or a cup of water?—"Moreover, the dogs came, and licked his sores;" being more compassionate than their master.—"And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom." Hear this, all ye that are poor in this world. Ye that, many times, have not food to eat, or raiment to put on; ye that have not a place where to lay your head, unless it be a cold garret, or a foul and damp cellar! Ye are now reduced to "solicit the cold hand of charity." Yet lift up your load; it shall not always be thus. I love you, I pity you; I admire you, when "in patience ye possess your souls." Yet I cannot help you. But there is one that can: the Father of the fatherless, and the Husband of the widow. "The poor crieth unto the Lord; and he heareth him, and delivereth him out of all his troubles." Yet a little while, if ye truly turn to him, his angels shall carry you into Abraham's bosom. There ye shall "hunger no more, and thirst no more;" ye shall feel no more sorrow or pain; but "the Lamb shall wipe away all tears from your eyes, and lead you forth beside fountains of living waters."

4. But see, the scene is changed! "The rich man also died." What! in spite of his riches? Probably sooner than he desired. For how just is that word: "Oh, death, how bitter art thou to a man that is at rest in the midst of his possessions?" However, if that would be a comfort, he "was buried." But how little did it signify, whether he was laid under a lofty monument, or among

> "Graves with bending osier bound,
> That nameless heave the crumbled ground?"

And what followed? "In hell he lifted his eyes." This, it is certain, ye need not do. God does not require it of you: "He willeth not that any should perish." Ye cannot, unless by your own wilful choice, intrude into those regions of wo, which God did not prepare for *you*, but for "the devil and his angels."

5. See the scene change again! "He seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." And he knew him; although, perhaps, he had only cast a glance at him, while he "lay at his gates." Is any of you in doubt, whether we shall know one another in the other world? Here your doubts may receive a full solution. If a soul in hell knew Lazarus in paradise, as far off as he was, certainly those that are together in paradise will perfectly know each other.

6. "And he cried, and said, Father Abraham, have mercy upon me!"—I do not remember in all the Bible, any prayer made to a saint, but this. And if we observe who made it,—a man in hell,—and with what success, we shall hardly wish to follow the precedent. Oh let us cry for mercy to God, not to man! And it is our wisdom to cry now, while we are in the land of mercy; otherwise it will be too late!—"I am tormented in this flame!" Tormented, observe, not purified! Vain hope, that fire can purify a spirit! As well might you expect water to cleanse the soul, as fire. God forbid that you or I should make the trial!

7. And "Abraham said, Son, remember:"—mark, how Abraham accosts a damned spirit: and shall we behave with less tenderness to any of the children of God, "because they are not of our opinion?"—"Thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things." Oh, beware it be

not your case! Are not the things of the world "thy good things?" The chief objects of thy desire and pursuit? Are they not thy chief joy? If so, thou art in a very dangerous state; in the very condition which Dives was in upon earth! Do not then dream, that all is well, because thou art "highly esteemed among men;" because thou doest no harm, or doest much good, or attendest all the ordinances of God. What is all this if thy soul cleaves to the dust? If thy heart is in the world: if thou lovest the creature more than the Creator.

8. How striking are the next words! "Beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed; so that they who would pass from us to you, cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence." This was the text which occasioned the epitaph on a right honourable infidel and gamester:—

> "Here lies a dicer; long in doubt
> If death could kill the soul, or not?
> Here ends his doubtfulness; at last
> Convinced;—but, ah! the die is cast!"

But, blessed be God, *your* die is not cast yet. You are not passed the great gulf, but have it still in your power to choose whether you will be attended by angels or fiends, when your soul quits its earthly mansion. Now stretch out your hand to eternal life, or eternal death! And God says, "Be it unto thee, even as thou wilt!"

9. Being repulsed in this, he makes another request: "I pray thee, send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify to them."—It is not impossible that other unhappy spirits may wish well to the relations they have left behind them. But this is the accepted time for them, as well as for us. Let us, then, address them ourselves; and let us beg our living friends to give us all the help they can, without waiting for assistance from the inhabitants of another world. Let us earnestly exhort them to use the helps they have; to "hear Moses and the prophets." We are, indeed, apt to think, like that unhappy spirit, "If one went to them from the dead, they will repent." "But Abraham said, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

III. I am, in the third place, to prove the truth of this weighty sentence: which I will do, first, briefly, and then more at large.

1. And, first, to express the matter briefly: It is certain, that no human spirit, while it is in the body, can *persuade* another *to repent;* can work in him an entire change, both of heart and life: a change from universal wickedness, to universal holiness. And suppose that spirit discharged from the body, it is no more able to do this, than it was before: no power less than that which created it at first, can create any soul anew. No angel, much less any human spirit, whether in the body or out of the body, can bring one soul "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." It might very possibly fright him to death, or to the belief of any speculative truth; but it could not fright him into spiritual life. God alone can raise those that are "dead in trespasses and sins."

2. In order to prove more at large, that if men "hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be [effectually] persuaded [to repent,] though one rose from the dead;" I will propose a case of this kind, with all the advantages that can be conceived. Suppose, then one

that does not "hear Moses and the prophets," that does not believe the Scripture to be of God, to be fast asleep in his bed, and suddenly to awake, while the clock was just striking one. He is surprised to observe the chamber as light as if it were noon day. He looks up, and sees one whom he perfectly knew, standing at his bed side. Though a little surprised at first, he quickly recollects himself, and has the courage to ask "Are not you my friend, who died at such a time?" He answers, "I am. I am come from God, with a message to *you*. You have often wished you could see one risen from the dead; and said, then you *would* repent. You have your wish; and I am ordered to inform you, you are seeking death in the error of your life. If you die in the state you are in now, you will die eternally. I warn you in his name, that the Scriptures are the real word of God; that from the moment you die, you will be remarkably happy, or unspeakably miserable; that you cannot be happy hereafter, unless you are holy here: which cannot be, unless you are born again. Receive this call from God! Eternity is at hand. Repent, and believe the gospel!" Having spoken these words, he vanishes away; and the room is dark as it was before.

3. One may easily believe, it would be impossible for him not to be convinced for the present. He would sleep no more that night; and would, as soon as possible, tell his family what he had seen and heard. Not content with this, he would be impatient to tell it to his former companions. And, probably, observing the earnestness with which he spoke, they would not then contradict him. They would say to each other, "Give him time to cool; then he will be a reasonable man again."

4. Now it is constantly found, that impressions made on the memory gradually decay: that they grow weaker and weaker in process of time, and the traces of them fainter and fainter. So it must be in this case; which his companions observing, would not fail to seize the opportunity. They would speak to this effect: "It was a strange account you gave us some time since: the more so, because we know *you* to be a sensible man, and not inclined to enthusiasm. But, perhaps, you have not fully considered, how difficult it is, in some cases, to distinguish our dreams from our waking thoughts. Has any one yet been able to find out an infallible criterion between them? Is it not then possible, that you may have been asleep, when this lively impression was made on your mind?" When he had been brought to think, *possibly* it might be a dream; they would soon persuade him, *probably* it was so; and not long after, to believe, it *certainly* was a dream. So little would it avail, that one came from the dead!

5. It could not be expected to be otherwise. For what was the effect which was wrought upon him? 1. He was exceedingly frightened 2. This fright made way for a deeper conviction of the truth then declared: but, 3. His heart was not changed. None but the Almighty could effect this. Therefore, 4. The bias of his soul was still set the wrong way: he still loved the world, and consequently, wished that the Scripture was not true. How easily then, as the fright wore off, would he again believe what he wished! The conclusion, then, is plain and undeniable. If men "hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded" to repent and believe the gospel, "though one rose from the dead."

6. We may add one consideration more, which brings the matter to a full issue. Before, or about the same time, that Lazarus was carried into Abraham's bosom, another Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary, was actually raised from the dead. But were even those who believed the fact persuaded to repent? So far from it, that "they took counsel to kill Lazarus," as well as his Master! Away, then, with the fond imagination, that those who "hear not Moses and the prophets would be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

7. From the whole we may draw this general conclusion: that standing revelation is the best means of rational conviction: far preferable to any of those extraordinary means which some imagine would be more effectual. It is therefore our wisdom to avail ourselves of this; to make full use of it; so that it may be a lantern to our feet, and a light in all our paths. Let us take care, that our whole heart and life be conformable thereto; that it be the constant rule of all our tempers, all our words, and all our actions. So shall we preserve in all things the testimony of a good conscience towards God: and when our course is finished, we too shall be "carried by angels into Abraham's bosom."

Birmingham, March 25, 1788.

SERMON CXVIII.—*The difference between walking by sight, and walking by faith.*

"We walk by faith, not by sight," 2 Cor. v, 7.

1. How short is this description of real Christians! And yet how exceeding full! It comprehends, it sums up the whole experience of those that are truly such, from the time they are born of God, till they remove into Abraham's bosom. For, who are the *we* that are here spoken of? All that are true Christian believers. I say, *Christian*, not *Jewish believers*. All that are not only *servants*, but *children* of God. All that have "the Spirit of adoption, crying in their hearts, Abba, Father." All that have "the Spirit of God witnessing with their spirits, that they are the sons of God."

2. All these, and these alone, can say, "We walk by faith, and not by sight." But before we can possibly "walk by faith," we must *live* by faith, and not by sight. And to all real Christians our Lord saith, "Because I live, ye live also:" ye live a life which the world, whether learned or unlearned, "know not of." "You that," like the world, "were dead in trespasses and sins, hath he quickened," and made alive; given you new senses,—spiritual senses,—"senses exercised to discern spiritual good and evil."

3. In order thoroughly to understand this important truth, it may be proper to consider the whole matter. All the children of men that are not born of God, "walk by sight," having no higher principle. By *sight*, that is, by *sense*; a part being put for the whole; the sight for all the senses;—the rather, because it is more noble and more extensive than any, or all the rest. There are but few objects which we can discern by the three inferior senses of taste, smell, and feeling: and none of these can take any cognizance of its object, unless it be brought into a direct contact with it. Hearing, it is true, has a larger sphere

of action, and gives us some knowledge of things that are distant. But how small is that distance, suppose it were fifty or a hundred miles, compared to that between the earth and the sun! And what is even this in comparison of the distance of the sun, and moon, and the fixed stars! Yet the sight continually takes knowledge of objects even at this amazing distance.

4. By sight we take knowledge of the visible world, from the surface of the earth, to the region of the fixed stars. But what is the world visible to us, but "a speck of creation," compared to the whole universe? to the invisible world? that part of the creation which we cannot see at all, by reason of its distance? In the place of which, through the imperfection of our senses, we are presented with a universal blank.

5. But beside these innumerable objects, which we cannot see by reason of their distance, have we not sufficient ground to believe, that there are innumerable others of too delicate a nature to be discerned by any of our senses? Do not all men of unprejudiced reason allow the same thing, (the small number of materialists, or atheists, I cannot term *men of reason*,) that there is an invisible world, naturally such, as well as a visible one? But which of our senses is fine enough to take the least knowledge of this? We can no more perceive any part of this, by our sight, than by our feeling. Should we allow, with the ancient poet, that

> "Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth
> Unseen, both when we wake, and when we sleep;"

Should we allow, that the great Spirit, the Father of all, filleth both heaven and earth; yet is the finest of our senses utterly incapable of perceiving either him or them.

6. All our external senses are evidently adapted to this external, visible world. They are designed to serve us only while we sojourn here,—while we dwell in these houses of clay. They have nothing to do with the invisible world: they are not adapted to it. And they can take no more cognizance of the eternal, than of the invisible world: although we are as fully assured of the existence of this, as of any thing in the present world. We cannot think death puts a period to our being. The body indeed returns to dust; but the soul, being of a nobler nature, is not affected thereby. There is, therefore, an eternal world, of what kind soever it be. But how shall we attain the knowledge of this? What will teach us to draw aside the veil—"that hangs 'twixt mortal and immortal being?" We all know,—"the vast, the unbounded prospect lies before us:" but we are constrained to add,—"yet clouds, alas! and darkness rest upon it."

7. The most excellent of our senses, it is undeniably plain, can give us no assistance herein. And what can our boasted reason do? It is now universally allowed, *nihil est in intellectu quod non fuit prius in sensu:* "nothing is in the understanding, which was not first perceived by some of the senses." Consequently, the understanding, having here nothing to work upon, can afford us no help at all; so that, in spite of all the information we can gain, either from sense or reason, both the invisible and eternal world are unknown to all that "walk by sight."

8. But is there no help? Must they remain in total darkness concerning the invisible and the eternal world? We cannot affirm this. Even the heathens did not all remain in total darkness concerning

them. Some few rays of light have, in all ages and nations, gleamed through the shade. Some light they derived from various fountains, touching the invisible world. "The heavens declared the glory of God," though not to their outward sight: "The firmament showed," to the eyes of their understanding, the existence of their Maker. From the creation they inferred the being of a Creator, powerful and wise, just and merciful. And hence they concluded, there must be an eternal world, a future state, to commence after the present; wherein the justice of God in punishing wicked men, and his mercy in rewarding the righteous, will be openly and undeniably displayed, in the sight of all intelligent creatures.

9. We may likewise reasonably suppose, that some traces of knowledge, both with regard to the invisible and the eternal world, were delivered down from Noah and his children, both to their immediate and remote descendants. And however these were obscured or disguised by the addition of numberless fables, yet something of truth was still mingled with them, and these streaks of light prevented utter darkness. Add to this, that God never, in any age or nation, "left himself quite without a witness" in the hearts of men; but while he "gave them rain and fruitful seasons;" imparted some imperfect knowledge of the Giver. "He is the true light that" (still in some degree) "enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world."

10. But all these lights put together availed no farther than to produce a faint twilight. It gave them, even the most enlightened of them, no ἔλεγχος, no *demonstration*, no *demonstrative conviction*, either of the invisible, or of the eternal world. Our philosophical poet justly terms Socrates, "the wisest of all moral men;" that is, of all that were not favoured with divine revelation. Yet what evidence had he of another world, when he addressed those that had condemned him to death?—"And now, oh ye judges, ye are going to live, and I am going to die. Which of these is best, God knows; but I suppose, no man does." Alas! What a confession is this! Is this all the evidence that poor dying Socrates had, either of an invisible, or an eternal world? And yet even this is preferable to the light of the great and good emperor Adrian. Remember, ye modern heathens, and copy after his pathetic address to his parting soul. (For fear I should puzzle you with Latin, I give it you in Prior's fine translation.)

"Poor, little, pretty, fluttering thing,
Must we no longer live together?
And dost thou prune thy trembling wing,
To take thy flight, thou know'st not whither?
Thy pleasing vein, thy humorous folly,
Lies all neglected, all forgot!
And pensive, wavering, melancholy,
Thou hop'st and fear'st, thou know'st not what."

11 "Thou know'st not what!" True, there was no knowledge of what was to be hoped or feared after death, till "the Sun of righteousness" arose, to dispel all their vain conjectures; and "brought life and immortality," that is, immortal life, "to light, through the gospel." Then, (and not till then, unless in some rare instances,) God revealed, unveiled the invisible world. He then revealed himself to the children of men. "The Father revealed the Son" in their hearts; and the Son revealed the Father. He that of old time "commanded light to shine

out of darkness, shined in their hearts and enlightened them with the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

12. It is where sense can be of no farther use, that faith comes in to our help: it is the grand *desideratum:* it does what none of the senses can; no, not with all the helps that art hath invented. All our instruments, however improved by the skill and labour of so many succeeding ages, do not enable us to make the least discovery of these unknown regions. They barely serve the occasions for which they were formed, in the present visible world.

13. How different is the case, how vast the pre-eminence of them that "walk by faith!" God having "opened the eyes of their understanding," pours divine light into their soul; whereby they are enabled to "see him that is invisible;" to see God, and the things of God. What their "eye had not seen, nor their ear heard, neither had it entered into their heart to conceive," God from time to time reveals to them by the "unction of the Holy One, which teacheth them of all things." Having "entered into the holiest by the blood of Jesus;" by that "new and living way," and being joined unto "the general assembly and church of the first-born, and unto God the Judge of all, and Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant;" each of these can say, "I live not, but Christ liveth in me;" I now live that life, "which is hid with Christ in God:" "And when Christ, who is *my* life shall appear, then *I* shall likewise appear with him in glory."

14. They that *live* by faith, *walk by faith.* But what is implied in this? They regulate all their judgments concerning good and evil, not with reference to visible and temporal things, but to things invisible and eternal. They think visible things to be of small value, because they pass away like a dream; but, on the contrary, they account invisible things to be of high value, because they will never pass away. Whatever is invisible is eternal: the things that are not seen, do not perish. So the apostle: "The things that are seen are temporal; but the things that are not seen are eternal." Therefore, they that "walk by faith" do not desire the "things which are seen;" neither are they the object of their pursuit. They "set their affection on things above, not on things on the earth." They seek only the things which are "where Jesus sitteth at the right hand of God." Because they know, "the things that are seen are temporal;" passing away like a shadow; therefore, they "look not at them:" they desire them not; they account them as nothing: but "they look at the things which are not seen; that are eternal;" that never pass away. By these they form their judgments of all things. They judge them to be good or evil, as they promote or hinder their welfare, not in time, but in eternity. They weigh whatever occurs, in this balance: what influence has it on my eternal state? They regulate all their tempers and passions, all their desires, joys, and fears, by this standard. They regulate all their thoughts, and designs, all their words and actions, so as to prepare them for that invisible and eternal world, to which they are shortly going. They do not *dwell,* but only *sojourn* here; not looking upon earth as their home, but only

> "Travelling through Immanuel's ground,
> To fairer worlds on high."

15. Brethren, are *you* of this number, who are now here before God? Do *you* see him that "is invisible?" Have you faith? Living faith?

The faith of a child? Can you say, "The life that I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me?" Do you "walk by faith?" Observe the question. I do not ask, whether you curse, or swear, or profane the sabbath, or live in any outward sin? I do not ask, whether you do good, more or less? Or attend all the ordinances of God? But, suppose you are blameless in all these respects, I ask, in the name of God, By what standard do you judge of the value of things? By the visible or the invisible world? Bring the matter to an issue in a single instance. Which do you judge best, that your son should be a pious cobbler, or a profane lord? Which appears to you most eligible, that your daughter should be a child of God, and walk on foot, or a child of the devil, and ride in a coach and six? When the question is concerning marrying your daughter, if you consider her body more than her soul? Take knowledge of yourself! You are in the way to hell and not to heaven: for you walk by sight, and not by faith. I do not ask, whether you live in any outward sin or neglect, —but do you *seek*, in the general tenor of your life, "the things that are above," or the things that are below? Do you "set your affection on things above," or on "things of the earth?" If on the latter, you are as surely in the way of destruction, as a thief, or a common drunkard. My dear friends, let every man, every woman among you, deal honestly with yourselves. Ask your own heart, what am I seeking day by day? What am I desiring? What am I pursuing? Earth or heaven? The things that are seen, or the things that are not seen? What is your object, God or the world? As the Lord liveth, if the world is your object, still all your religion is vain.

16. See, then, my dear brethren, that from this time, at least, ye choose the better part. Let your judgment of all the things round about you be according to the real value of things, with a reference to the invisible and eternal world. See that ye judge every thing fit to be pursued or shunned, according to the influence it will have on your eternal state. See that your affections, your desire, your joy, your hope, be set, not on transient objects, not on things that fly as a shadow, that pass away like a dream; but on those that are incapable of change, that are incorruptible and fade not away; those that remain the same, when heaven and earth "flee away, and there is no place found for them." See that in all you think, speak, or do, the eye of your soul be single, fixed on "Him that is invisible," and "the glories that shall be revealed." Then shall "your whole body be full of light:" your whole soul shall enjoy the light of God's countenance; and you shall continually "see the light of the glorious love of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

17. See, in particular, that all your "desire be unto him, and unto the remembrance of his name." Beware "of foolish and hurtful desires;" such as arise from any visible or temporal thing. All these St. John warns us of, under that general term, "love of the world." It is not so much to the men of the world, as to the children of God, he gives that important direction; "Love not the world, neither the things of the world." Give no place to the "desire of the flesh;" the gratification of the outward senses, whether of the taste, or any other. Give no place to "the desire of the eye;" the internal sense, or imagination, by gratifying it, either by grand things, or beautiful, or

uncommon. Give no place to the "pride of life;" the desire of wealth, of pomp, or of the honour that cometh of men. St. John confirms this advice, by a consideration parallel to that observation which St. Paul had made to the Corinthians: "For the world and the fashion of it passeth away." "The fashion of it,"—all worldly objects, business, pleasures, cares, whatever now attracts our regard or attention,—"passeth away;" is in the very act of passing, and will return no more. Therefore, desire none of these fleeting things, but that glory which "abideth for ever."

18. Observe well: this is religion, and this alone: this alone is true Christian religion: not this or that opinion, or system of opinions, be they ever so true, ever so scriptural. It is true, this is commonly called faith. But those who suppose it to be religion, are given up to a strong delusion, to believe a lie: and if they suppose it to be a sure passport to heaven, are in the high road to hell. Observe well: religion is not harmlessness; which a careful observer of mankind properly terms, *hellish harmlessness;* as it sends thousands to the bottomless pit. It is not *morality;* excellent as that is, when it is built on a right foundation, loving faith: but when otherwise, it is of no value in the sight of God. It is not *formality;* the most exact observance of all the ordinances of God. This too, unless it be built on the right foundation, is no more pleasing to God, than "the cutting off a dog's neck." No: religion is no less than living in eternity, and walking in eternity: and hereby walking in the love of God and man; in lowliness, meekness, and resignation. This, and this alone, is that "life which is hid with Christ in God." He alone, who experiences this, "dwells in God, and God in him." This alone is setting the crown upon Christ's head, and doing his "will on earth, as it is done in heaven."

19. It will easily be observed, that this is the very thing that men of the world call enthusiasm. A word just fit for their purpose, because no man can tell either the meaning, or even the derivation of it. If it has any determinate sense, it means a species of religious madness. Hence, when you speak your experience, they immediately cry out, "Much religion hath made thee mad." And all that you experience, either of the invisible or of the eternal world, they suppose to be only the waking dreams of a heated imagination. It cannot be otherwise, when men born blind take upon them to reason concerning light and colours. They will readily pronounce those to be insane, who affirm the existence of those things whereof they have no conception.

20. From all that has been said, it may be seen with the utmost clearness, what is the nature of that fashionable thing called *dissipation.* He that hath ears to hear, let him hear! It is the very quintessence of atheism: it is artificial, added to natural ungodliness. It is the art of forgetting God; of being altogether "without God in the world:" the art of excluding him, if not out of the world he has created, yet out of the minds of all his intelligent creatures. It is a total studied inattention to the whole invisible and eternal world; more expecially to death, the gate of eternity, and to the important consequences of death, heaven and hell!

21. This is the real nature of *dissipation.* And is it so harmless a thing, as it is usually thought? It is one of the choicest instruments

of destroying immortal spirits, that was ever forged in the magazines of hell. It has been the means of plunging myriads of souls, that might have enjoyed the glory of God, into the everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. It blots out all religion at one stroke, and levels man with the beasts that perish. All ye that fear God, flee from dissipation! Dread and abhor the very name of it! Labour to have God in all your thoughts! To have eternity ever in your eye! "Look" continually, "not at the things that are seen, but at the things which are not seen." Let your hearts be fixed there, where "Christ sitteth at the right hand of God;" that whensoever he calleth you, "an entrance may be ministered unto you abundantly into his everlasting kingdom!"

London, December 30, 1788.

SERMON CXIX.—*The Unity of the Divine Being.*

"There is one God," Mark xii, 32.

1. AND as there is one God, so there is one religion, and one happiness for all men. God never intended there should be any more; and it is not possible there should. Indeed, in another sense, as the apostle observes, "there are gods many, and lords many." All the heathen nations had their gods, and many whole shoals of them. And generally, the more polished they were, the more gods they heaped up to themselves: but to us, to all that are favoured with the Christian revelation, "there is but one God;" who declares of himself, "Is there any God, beside me? There is none; I know not any."

2. But who can search out this God to perfection? None of the creatures that he has made. Only some of his attributes he hath been pleased to reveal to us in his word. Hence we learn, that God is an eternal being. "His goings forth are from everlasting," and will continue to everlasting. As he ever was, so he ever will be; as there was no beginning of his existence, so there will be no end. This is universally allowed to be contained in his very name, JEHOVAH; which the apostle John accordingly renders, "He that was, and that is, and that is to come." Perhaps it would be as proper to say, "He is from everlasting to everlasting."

3. Nearly allied to the eternity of God is his omnipresence. As he exists through infinite duration, so he cannot but exist through infinite space; according to his own question, equivalent to the strongest assertion; "Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord." (Heaven and earth, in the Hebrew idiom, implying the whole universe:) Which, therefore, according to his own declaration, is filled with his presence

4. This one, eternal, omnipresent being, is likewise all perfect. He has from eternity to eternity, all the perfections and infinitely more, than it ever did, or ever can enter into the heart of man to conceive; yea, infinitely more than the angels in heaven can conceive: these perfections we usually term, the attributes of God.

5. And he is omnipotent, as well as omnipresent: there can be no more bounds to his power, than to his presence. He "hath a mighty arm: strong is his hand, and high is his right hand." He doeth what-

soever pleaseth him, in the heavens, the earth, the sea, and in all deep places. With men, we know, many things are impossible; "but not with God: with him all things are possible." Whensoever he willeth, to do is present with him.

6. The omniscience of God is a clear and necessary consequence of his omnipresence. If he is present in every part of the universe, he cannot but know whatever is, or is done there: according to the word of St. James; "Known unto God are all his works," and the works of every creature, "from the beginning" of the world; or rather, as the phrase literally implies, "from eternity." His eyes are not only "over all the earth, beholding the evil and the good;" but likewise over the whole creation; yea, and the paths of uncreated night. Is there any difference between his knowledge and his wisdom? If there be, is not his knowledge the more general term, (at least according to our weak conceptions,) and his wisdom a particular branch of it? Namely, the knowing the end of every thing that exists, and the means of applying it to that end?

7. Holiness is another of the attributes of the almighty, all wise God. He is infinitely distant from every touch of evil. He "is light; and in him is no darkness at all." He is a God of unblemished justice and truth: but above all is his mercy. This we may easily learn from that beautiful passage in the thirty-third and fourth chapters of Exodus: "And Moses said, I beseech thee, show me thy glory. And the Lord descended in the cloud, and proclaimed the name of the Lord, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, and forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin."

8. This God is a Spirit; not having such a body, such parts, or passions, as men have. It was the opinion both of the ancient Jews and the ancient Christians, that He alone is a pure spirit, totally separate from all matter: whereas they supposed all other spirits, even the highest angels, even cherubim and seraphim, to dwell in material vehicles, though of an exceeding light and subtile substance. At that point of duration, which the infinite wisdom of God saw to be most proper, for reasons which lie hid in the abyss of his own understanding, not to be fathomed by any finite mind, God "called into being all that is;" created the heavens and the earth, together with all that they contain. "All things were created by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made." He created man, in particular, after his own image, to be "a picture of his own eternity." When he had raised man from the dust of the earth, he breathed into him an immortal spirit. Hence he is peculiarly called, "the Father of our spirits;" yea, "the Father of the spirits of all flesh."

9. He "made all things," as the wise man observes, "for himself:" "for his glory they were created." Not "as if he needed any thing;" seeing "he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things." He made all things to be happy. He made man to be happy in himself. He is the proper centre of spirits; for whom every created spirit was made. So true is that well known saying of the ancient fathers: *Fecisti nos ad te: Et irrequietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te.* "Thou hast made us for thyself; and our heart cannot rest till it resteth in thee."

10. This observation gives us a clear answer to that question in the Assembly's catechism: "For what end did God create man?" The

answer is, "To glorify and enjoy him for ever." This is undoubtedly true: but is it quite clear, especially to men of ordinary capacities Do the generality of common people understand that expression,—"To glorify God?" No; no more than they understand Greek. And it is altogether above the capacity of children; to whom we can scarce ever speak plain enough. Now is not this the very principle that should be inculcated upon every human creature,—"You are made to be happy in God," as soon as ever reason dawns? Should not every parent, as soon as a child begins to talk, or to run alone, say something of this kind; "See! what is that which shines so over your head? That we call the sun. See, how bright it is! Feel how it warms you! It makes the grass to spring, and every thing to grow. But God made the sun The sun could not shine, nor warm, nor do any good without him." In this plain and familiar way a wise parent might, many times in a day, say something of God; particularly insisting, "He made *you;* and he made you to be happy in him; and nothing else can make you happy." We cannot press this too soon. If you say, "Nay, but they cannot understand you when they are so young:" I answer, No; nor when they are fifty years old, unless God opens their understanding. And can he not do this at any age?

11. Indeed this should be pressed on every human creature, young and old, the more earnestly and diligently, because so exceeding few, even of those that are called Christians, seem to know any thing about it. Many indeed think of being happy with God in heaven; but the being happy in God on earth never entered into their thoughts. The less so, because from the time they came into the world, they are surrounded with idols. Such, in turns, are all "the things that are seen," (whereas God is not seen,) which all promise a happiness independent of God. Indeed it is true, that

"Upright both in heart and will,
We by our God were made:
But we turn'd from good to ill,
And o'er the creatures strayed:
Multiplied our wandering thought,
Which first was fixed on God alone
In ten thousand objects sought
The bliss we lost in one."

12. These idols, these rivals of God, are innumerable: but they may be nearly reduced to three parts. First, objects of sense; such as gratify one or more of our outward senses. These excite the first kind of "love of the world," which St. John terms, "the desire of the flesh." Secondly, objects of the imagination; things that gratify our fancy, by their grandeur, beauty, or novelty. All these make us fair promises of happiness, and thereby prevent our seeking it in God. This the apostle terms, "the desire of the eyes;" whereby, chiefly, the imagination is gratified. They are, thirdly, what St. John calls, "the pride of life." He seems to mean, honour, wealth, and whatever directly tends to engender pride.

13. But suppose we were guarded against all these, are there not other idols, which we have need to be apprehensive of; and idols, therefore, the more dangerous, because we suspect no danger from them? For is there any danger to be feared from our friends and relations; from the mutual endearments of husbands and wives, or of

parents and children? Ought we not to bear a very tender affection to them? Ought we not to love them only less than God? Yea, and is there not a tender affection due to those whom God has made profitable to our souls? Are we not commanded to "esteem them very highly in love for their works' sake?" All this is unquestionably true: and this very thing makes the difficulty. Who is sufficient for this, to go far enough herein, and no farther? To love them enough, and not too much? Can we love a wife, a child, a friend, well enough, without loving the creature more than the Creator? Who is able to follow the caution which St. Paul gives to the Christians at Thessalonica? 1 Thes. iv, 5.

14. I wish that weighty passage (so strangely disguised in our translation) were duly considered: "Let every one of you know how to possess his vessel (his wife) in sanctification and honour." So as neither to dishonour God nor himself; nor to obstruct, but farther holiness. St. Paul goes on, Μη εν παθει επιθυμιας, which we render, "Not in the lust of concupiscence," (What is this? it gives the English reader no conception at all. Παθος means any *violent* or *impetuous affection*. Επιθυμια is *desire*. By the two words the apostle undoubtedly means, vehement and impetuous affections,)—"as the Gentiles who know not God;" and so may naturally seek happiness in a creature.

15. If, by the grace of God, we have avoided or forsaken all these idols, there is still one more dangerous than all the rest; that is, religion. It will easily be conceived, I mean false religion; that is, any religion which does not imply, the giving the heart to God. Such is, first, a religion of opinions; or what is commonly called, orthodoxy. Into this snare fall thousands of those, who profess to hold "salvation by faith:" indeed all of those who, by faith, mean only a system of Arminian or Calvinian opinions. Such is, secondly, a religion of forms; of barely outward worship, how constantly soever performed; yea, though we attend the church service every day, and the Lord's supper every Sunday. Such is, thirdly, a religion of works; of seeking the favour of God, by doing good to men. Such is, lastly, a religion of atheism; that is, every religion whereof God is not laid for the foundation. In a word a religion wherein "God in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself," is not the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last point.

16. True religion is right tempers towards God and man. It is, in two words, gratitude and benevolence: gratitude to our Creator and supreme Benefactor, and benevolence to our fellow creatures. In other words, it is the loving God with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves.

17. It is in consequence of our knowing God loves us, that we love him, and love our neighbour as ourselves. Gratitude towards our Creator cannot but produce benevolence to our fellow creatures. The love of Christ constrains us, not only to be harmless, to do no ill to our neighbour, but to be useful, to be "zealous of good works;" "as we have time, to do good unto all men;" and to be patterns to all, of true, genuine morality; of justice, mercy, and truth. This is religion, and this is happiness; the happiness for which we were made. This begins when we begin to know God, by the teaching of his own Spirit. As soon as the Father of spirits reveals his Son in our hearts, and the Son

reveals his Father, the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts; then, and not till then, we are happy. We are happy, first, in the consciousness of his favour, which indeed is better than life itself; next, in the constant communion with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ; then, in all the heavenly tempers, which he hath wrought in us by his Spirit; again, in the testimony of his Spirit, that all our works please him, and, lastly, in the testimony of our own spirits, that "in simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in the world." Standing fast in this liberty from sin and sorrow, wherewith Christ hath made them free, real Christians "rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in every thing give thanks." And their happiness still increases, as they "grow up into the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

18. But how little is this religion experienced, or even thought of, in the Christian world! On the contrary, what reason have we to take up the lamentation of a dying saint; (Mr. Haliburton, of St. Andrew's, in Scotland;) "Oh sirs, I am afraid a kind of *rational* religion is more and more prevailing among us; a religion that has nothing of Christ belonging to it: nay, that has not only nothing of Christ, but nothing of God in it!" And indeed how generally does this prevail, not only among professed infidels, but also among those who call themselves Christians; who profess to believe the Bible to be the word of God! Thus our own countryman, Mr. Wollaston, in that elaborate work, "The Religion of Nature Delineated," presents us with a complete system of religion, without any thing of God about it; without being beholden, in any degree, to either the Jewish or Christian revelation. Thus Monsieur Burlomachi, of Geneva, in his curious treatise on "The Law of Nature," does not make any more use of the Bible than if he had never seen it. And thus the late professor Hutcheson, of Glasgow, (a stranger writer than either of the other,) is so far from grounding virtue on either the fear or the love of God, that he quite shuts God out of the question; not scrupling to declare, in express terms, that "a regard to God is *inconsistent with* virtue: inasmuch that if in doing a beneficent action, you expect God to reward it, the virtue of the action is lost: it is then not a virtuous, but a selfish action!"

19. Perhaps, indeed, there are not many who carry the matter to so great a length. But how great is the number of those, who, allowing religion to consist of two branches, our duty to God, and our duty to our neighbour, entirely forget the first part, and put the second part for the whole,—for the entire duty of man. Thus almost all men of letters, both in England, France, Germany, yea, and all the civilized countries of Europe, extol *humanity* to the skies, as the very essence of religion. To this the great triumvirate, Rousseau, Voltaire, and David Hume, have contributed all their labours, sparing no pains to establish a religion, which should stand on its own foundation, independent of any revelation whatever; yea, not supposing even the being of a God. So leaving him, if he have any being, to himself, they have found out both a religion and a happiness, which have no relation at all to God, nor any dependance upon him.

20. It is no wonder that this religion should grow fashionable, and spread far and wide in the world. But call it *humanity*, *virtue*, *morality*, or what you please; it is neither better nor worse than atheism. Men

hereby wilfully and designedly put asunder what God has joined,—the duties of the first and the second table. It is separating the love of our neighbour from the love of God. It is a plausible way of thrusting God out of the world he has made. They can do the business without him; and so either drop him entirely, not considering him at all; or suppose, that since

"He gave things their beginning,
And set this whirligig a spinning,"

he has not concerned himself with these trifles, but let every thing take its own course.

21. On the contrary, we have the fullest evidence that the eternal, omnipresent, almighty, all wise Spirit, as he created all things, so he continually superintends whatever he has created. He governs all, not only to the bounds of creation, but through the utmost extent of space; and not only through the short time that is measured by the earth and sun, but from everlasting to everlasting. We know, that as all nature, so all religion, and all happiness, depend on him; and we know that whoever teach to seek happiness without him, are monsters, and the pests of society.

22. But after all the vain attempts of learned or unlearned men, it will be found, as there is but one God, so there is but one happiness, and one religion. And both of these centre in God. Both by Scripture and by experience we know, that an unholy, and, therefore, an unhappy man, seeking rest but finding none, is sooner or later convinced, that sin is the ground of his misery, and cries out of the deep to him that is able to save, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" It is not long before he finds "redemption in the blood of Jesus, even the forgiveness of sins." Then "the Father reveals his Son" in his heart, and he "calls Jesus Lord, by the Holy Ghost." And then the love of God is "shed abroad in his heart, by the Holy Spirit which is given unto him." From this principle springs real, disinterested benevolence to all mankind; making him humble, meek, gentle to all men, easy to be entreated, to be convinced of what is right, and persuaded to what is good; inviolably patient, with a thankful acquiescence in every step of his adorable providence. This is religion, even the whole mind which was also in Christ Jesus. And has any man the insolence or the stupidity to deny, that this is happiness? Yea, that it

"Yields more of happiness below,
Than victors in a triumph know?"

23. There can be no doubt but from this love to God and man, a suitable conversation will follow. His "communication," that is, discourse, will "be always in grace, seasoned with salt, and meet to minister grace to the hearers." He will always "open his mouth with wisdom, and there will be in his tongue the law of kindness." Hence his affectionate words will "distil as the dew, and as the rain upon the tender herb." And men will know, "it is not he only that speaks, but the Spirit of the Father that speaketh in him." His actions will spring from the same source with his words; even from the abundance of a loving heart. And while all these aim at the glory of God, and tend to this one point, whatever he does, he may truly say,

"End of my every action thou,
In all things thee I see:
Accept my hallow'd labour now,
I do it as to thee!"

24. He to whom this character belongs, and he alone, is a Christian To him the one, eternal, omnipresent, all perfect Spirit, is the "alpha and omega, the first and the last." Not his Creator only, but his sustainer, his preserver, his governor; yea, his Father, his Saviour, Sanctifier, and Comforter. This God is his God, and his all, in time and in eternity. It is the benevolence springing from this root, which is pure and undefiled religion. But if it be built on any other foundation, as it is of no avail in the sight of God, so it brings no real, solid, permanent happiness to man, but leaves him still a poor, dry, indigent, and dissatisfied creature.

25. Let all, therefore, that desire to please God, condescend to be taught of God, and take care to walk in that path which God himself hath appointed. Beware of taking half of this religion for the whole, but take both parts of it together. And see that you begin where God himself begins: "Thou shalt have no other god before me." Is not this the first, our Lord himself being the Judge, as well as the great commandment? First, therefore, see that ye love God! next, your neighbour, every child of man. From this fountain let every temper, every affection, every passion flow. So shall that "mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." Let all your thoughts, words, and actions, spring from this! So shall you "inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world."

Dublin, April 9, 1789.

SERMON CXX.—*Causes of the Inefficacy of Christianity.*

"Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?" Jer. viii, 22.

1. THIS question, as here proposed by the prophet, relates only to a particular people,—the children of Israel. But I would here consider it in a general sense, with relation to all mankind. I would seriously inquire, Why has Christianity done so little good in the world? Is it not the balm, the outward means, which the great Physician has given to men, to restore their spiritual health? Why then is it not restored? You say, because of the deep and universal corruption of human nature. Most true. But here is the very difficulty. Was it not intended by our all wise and almighty Creator, to be the remedy for that corruption? A universal remedy, for a universal evil? But it has not answered this intention: it never did: it does not answer it at this day. The disease still remains in its full strength: wickedness of every kind; vice, inward and outward, in all its forms, still overspreads the face of the earth.

2. Oh Lord God, "righteous art thou! Yet let us plead with thee." How is this? Hast thou forgotten the world thou hast made? Which thou hast created for thy own glory? Canst thou despise the work of thy own hands, the purchase of thy Son's blood? Thou hast given medicine to heal our sickness; yet our sickness is not healed. Still darkness covers the earth, and thick darkness the people, Yea,

> "Darkness such as devils feel,
> Issuing from the pit of hell."

3. What a mystery is this? That Christianity should have done so little good in the world! Can any account of this be given? Can any reasons be assigned for it? Does it not seem that one reason it has done so little good is this,—because it is so little known? Certainly it can do no good where it is not known. But it is not known at this day to the far greater part of the inhabitants of the earth. In the last century, our ingenious and laborious countryman, Mr. Brerewood, travelled over great part of the known world, on purpose to inquire, so far as was possible, what proportion the Christians bear to the heathens and Mohammedans. And according to his computation, (probably the most accurate which has yet been made,) I suppose mankind to be divided into thirty parts, nineteen parts of these are still open heathens, having no more knowledge of Christianity than the beasts that perish. And we may add to these the numerous nations which have been discovered in the present century. Add to these such as profess the Mohammedan religion and utterly scorn Christianity; and five parts out of thirty of mankind are not so much as nominally Christians. So then five parts of mankind out of six are totally ignorant of Christianity. It is, therefore, no wonder that five in six of mankind, perhaps nine in ten, have no advantage from it.

4. But why is it that so little advantage is derived from it to the Christian world? Are Christians any better than other men? Are they better than Mohammedans or heathens? To say the truth, it is well if they are not worse: worse than either Mohammedans or heathens. In many respects they are abundantly worse; but then they are not properly Christians. The generality of these, though they bear the Christian name, do not know what Christianity is. They no more understand it than they do Greek or Hebrew; therefore they can be no better for it. What do the Christians, so called, of the eastern church, dispersed throughout the Turkish dominions, know of genuine Christianity? Those of the Morea, of Circassia, Mongrelia, Georgia? Are they not the very dregs of mankind? And have we reason to think that those of the southern church, those inhabiting Abyssinia, have any more conception than they, of "worshipping God in spirit and in truth?" Look we nearer home. See the northern churches; those that are under the patriarch of Moscow. How exceedingly little do they know, either of outward or inward Christianity! How many thousands, yea, myriads of those poor savages, know nothing of Christianity but the name? How little more do they know than the heathen Tartars on the one hand, or the heathen Chinese on the other!

5. But is not Christianity well known, at least, to all the inhabitants of the western world? A great part of which is eminently termed Christendom, or the land of Christians. Part of these are still members of the church of Rome; part are termed Protestants. As to the former, Portuguese, Spaniards, Italians, French, Germans, what do the bulk of them know of scriptural Christianity? Having had frequent opportunity of conversing with many of these both at home and abroad, I am bold to affirm, that they are in general totally ignorant, both as to the theory and practice of Christianity; so that they are "perishing," by thousands, "for lack of knowledge,"—for want of knowing the very first principles of Christianity.

6. "But surely this cannot be the case of the Protestants in France, Switzerland, Germany, and Holland. Much less in Denmark and Sweden." Indeed I hope it is not altogether. I am persuaded there are among them many knowing Christians; but I fear we must not think that one in ten, if one in fifty, is of this number: certainly not, if we may form a judgment of them by those we find in Great Britain and Ireland. Let us see how matters stand at our own door. Do the people of England, in general, (not the highest or the lowest; for these usually know nothing of the matter; but people of the middle rank,) understand Christianity? Do they conceive what it is? Can they give an intelligible account, either of the speculative or practical part of it? What know they of the very first principles of it? of the natural and moral attributes of God? of his particular providence? of the redemption of man? of the offices of Christ? of the operations of the Holy Ghost? of justification? of the new birth? of inward and outward sanctification? Speak of any of these things to the first ten persons you are in company with: and will you not find nine out of the ten ignorant of the whole affair? And are not most of the inhabitants of the Scotch Highlands fully as ignorant as these. Yea, and the common people in Ireland? (I mean the Protestants, of whom alone we are now speaking.) Make a fair inquiry, not only in the country cabins, but in the cities of Cork, Waterford, Limerick; yea, in Dublin itself. How few know what Christianity means! How small a number will you find that have any conception of the analogy of faith! of the connected chain of scripture truths, and their relation to each other! Namely, the natural corruption of man; justification by faith; the new birth; inward and outward holiness. It must be acknowledged by all competent judges, who converse freely with their neighbours in these kingdoms, that a vast majority of them know no more of these things, than they do of Hebrew or Arabic. And what good can Christianity do to these, who are so totally ignorant of it?

7. However, in some parts, both of England and Ireland, scriptural Christianity is well known; especially in London, Bristol, Dublin, and almost all the large and populous cities and towns of both kingdoms. In these, every branch of Christianity is openly and largely declared; and thousands upon thousands continually hear and receive "the truth as it is in Jesus." Why is it then, that even in these parts Christianity has had so little effect? Why are the generality of the people, in all these places, heathens still? no better than the heathens of Africa or America, either in their tempers or in their lives? Now how is this to be accounted for? I conceive thus: It was a common saying among the Christians in the primitive church; "The soul and the body make a man; the spirit and discipline make a Christian:" implying, that none could be real Christians, without the help of Christian discipline. But if this be so, is it any wonder that we find so few Christians; for where is Christian discipline? In what part of England (to go no farther) is Christian discipline added to Christian doctrine? Now whatever doctrine is preached, where there is not discipline, it cannot have its full effect upon the hearers.

8. To bring the matter closer still. Is not scriptural Christianity preached and generally known among the people commonly called Methodists? Impartial persons allow it is. And have they not Chris-

tian discipline too, in all the essential branches of it, regularly and constantly exercised? Let those who think any essential part of it is wanting, point it out and it shall not be wanting long. Why then are not these altogether Christians, who have both Christian doctrine and Christian discipline? Why is not the spiritual health of the people called Methodists recovered? Why is not all that "mind in us which was also in Christ Jesus?" Why have we not learned of him our very first lesson, to be meek and lowly of heart? to say with him in all circumstances of life; "Not as I will, but as thou wilt!" "I come not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me." Why are not we "crucified to the world, and the world crucified to us?" Dead to the "desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, and the pride of life?" Why do not all of us live "the life that is hid with Christ in God?" Oh why do not *we*, that have all possible helps, "walk as Christ also walked?" Hath he not left us an example that we might tread in his steps? But do we regard either his example or precept? To instance only in one point: who regards those solemn words; "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth?" Of the three rules which are laid down on this head, in the sermon on "the mammon of unrighteousness," you may find many that observe the first rule; namely, "gain all you can." You may find a few that observe the second; "save all you can:" but how many have you found that observe the third rule; "give all you can?" Have you reason to believe, that five hundred of these are to be found among fifty thousand Methodists? And yet nothing can be more plain, than that all who observe the two first rules without the third, will be two fold more the children of hell than ever they were before.

9. Oh that God would enable me once more, before I go hence, and am no more seen, to lift up my voice like a trumpet to those who *gain* and *save* all they can, but do not *give* all they can. Ye are the men, some of the chief men, who continually grieve the Holy Spirit of God, and in a great measure stop his gracious influence from descending on our assemblies. Many of your brethren, beloved of God, have not food to eat; they have not raiment to put on; they have not a place where to lay their heads. And why are they thus distressed? Because *you* impiously, unjustly, and cruelly detain from them what your Master and theirs lodges in *your* hands, on purpose to supply *their* wants! See that poor member of Christ, pinched with hunger, shivering with cold, half naked! Meantime you have plenty of this world's goods, of meat, drink, and apparel. In the name of God, what are you doing? Do you neither fear God, nor regard man? Why do you not deal your bread to the hungry, and cover the naked with a garment? Have you laid out in your own costly apparel what would have answered both these intentions? Did God command you so to do? Does he commend you for so doing? Did he entrust you with *his* (not *your*) goods for this end? And does he now say, "Servant of God, well done?" You well know he does not. This idle expense has no approbation, either from God, or your own conscience. But you say, You can *afford* it! Oh be ashamed to take such miserable nonsense into your mouths. Never more utter such stupid cant; such palpable absurdity! Can any steward *afford* to be an arrant knave? To waste his lord's goods? Can any servant *afford* to lay out his master's money, any otherwise than his master

appoints him? So far from it, that whoever does this, ought to be excluded from a Christian society.

10. "But is it possible to supply all the poor in our society with the necessaries of life?" It *was* possible once to do this, in a larger society than this. In the first church at Jerusalem, "there was not any among them that lacked; but distribution was made to every one, according as he had need." And we have full proof that it may be so still. It is so among the people called Quakers. Yea, and among the Moravians, so called. And why should it not be so with *us?* "Because they are ten times richer than we." Perhaps fifty times. And yet we are able enough, if we be equally willing, to do this.

A gentleman (a Methodist) told me some years since, "I shall leave forty thousand pounds among my children." Now suppose he had left them but twenty thousand, and given the other twenty thousand to God and the poor, would God have said to him, "Thou fool?" And this would have set all the society far above want.

11. But I will not talk of giving to God, or leaving half of your fortune. You might think this to be too high a price for heaven. I will come to lower terms. Are there not a few among you that could give a hundred pounds, perhaps some that could give a thousand, and yet leave your children as much as would help them to work out their own salvation? With two thousand pounds, and not much less, we could supply the present wants of all our poor, and put them in a way of supplying their own wants for the time to come. Now suppose this could be done, are we clear before God, while it is not done? Is not the neglect of it one cause why so many are still sick and weak among you? And that both in soul and in body? That they still grieve the Holy Spirit, by preferring the fashions of the world to the commands of God? And I many times doubt, whether we preachers are not in some measure partakers of their sin. I am in doubt whether it is not a kind of partiality. I doubt, whether it is not a great sin to keep them in our society. May it not hurt their souls, by encouraging them to persevere in walking contrary to the Bible? And may it not, in some measure, intercept the salutary influences of the blessed Spirit upon the whole community?

12. I am distressed. I know not what to do. I see what I might have done once. I might have said peremptorily and expressly, "Here I am: I and my Bible. I will not, I dare not vary from this book, either in great things or small. I have no power to dispense with one jot or tittle of what is contained therein. I am determined to be a Bible Christian, not almost, but altogether. Who will meet me on this ground? Join me on this, or not at all." With regard to dress in particular, I might have been as firm (and I now see it would have been far better,) as either the people called Quakers, or the Moravian brethren;—I might have said, "This is our manner of dress, which we know is both scriptural and rational. If you join with us, you are to dress as we do; but you need not join us unless you please." But, alas! the time is now past; and what I can do now, I cannot tell.

13. But to return to the main question. Why has Christianity done so little good, even among us? Among the Methodists? Among them that hear and receive the whole Christian doctrine, and that have Christian discipline added thereto, in the most essential parts of it? Plainly,

because we have forgot, or, at least, not duly attended to, those solemn words of our Lord; "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." It was the remark of a holy man several years ago, "Never was there before a people in the Christian church, who had so much of the power of God among them, with so little self denial." Indeed the work of God does go on, and in a surprising manner, notwithstanding this capital defect; but it cannot go on in the same degree as it otherwise would: neither can the word of God have its full effect, unless the hearers of it "deny themselves, and take up their cross daily."

14. It would be easy to show in how many respects the Methodists, in general, are deplorably wanting in the practice of Christian self denial: from which, indeed, they have been continually frighted by the silly outcries of the Antinomians. To instance only in one: While we were at Oxford, the rule of every Methodist was (unless in case of sickness,) to *fast* every Wednesday and Friday in the year, in imitation of the primitive church; for which they had the highest reverence. Now this practice of the primitive church is universally allowed. "Who does not know," says Epiphanius, an ancient writer, "that the fasts of the fourth and sixth days of the week (Wednesday and Friday) are observed by the Christians throughout the whole world?" So they were by the Methodists for several years; by them all, without any exception; but afterwards, some in London carried this to excess, and fasted so as to impair their health. It was not long before others made this a pretence for not fasting at all. And I fear there are now thousands of Methodists, so called, both in England and Ireland, who, following the same bad example, have entirely left off fasting; who are so far from fasting twice in the week, (as all the stricter Pharisees did,) that they do not fast twice in the month. Yea, are there not some of you who do not fast one day from the beginning of the year to the end? But what excuse can there be for this? I do not say for those that call themselves members of the church of England; but for any who profess to believe the Scripture to be the word of God? Since, according to this, the man that never fasts, is no more in the way to heaven, than the man that never prays.

15. But can any one deny that the members of the church of Scotland fast constantly: particularly on their sacramental occasions. In some parishes they return only once a year; but in others, suppose in large cities, they occur twice, or even thrice a year. Now it is well known there is always a fast day in the week preceding the administration of the Lord's supper. But occasionally looking into a book of accounts in one of their vestries, I observed so much set down, "*for the dinners* of the ministers, on the fast day!" And I am informed there is the same article in them all. And is there any doubt, but the people fast just as their ministers do? But what a farce is this! What a miserable burlesque upon a plain Christian duty! Oh that the general assembly would have regard to the honour of their nation! Let them roll away from it this shameful reproach, by either enforcing the duty, or removing that article from their books. Let it never appear there any more! Let it vanish away for ever!

16. But why is self denial in general so little practised at present among the Methodists? Why is so exceedingly little of it to be found

even in the oldest and largest societies? The more I observe and consider things, the more clearly it appears, what is the cause of this in London, in Bristol, in Birmingham, in Manchester, in Leeds, in Dublin, in Cork. The Methodists grow more and more self indulgent, because they *grow rich*. Although many of them are still deplorably poor; ("tell it not in Gath; publish it not in the streets of Askelon!") yet many others, in the space of twenty, thirty, or forty years, are twenty, thirty, yea, a hundred times richer than they were when they first entered the society. And it is an observation which admits of few exceptions, that nine in ten of these decreased in grace, in the same proportion as they increased in wealth. Indeed, according to the natural tendency of riches, we cannot expect it to be otherwise.

17. But how astonishing a thing is this! How can we understand it? Does it not seem (and yet this cannot be) that Christianity, true, scriptural Christianity, has a tendency, in process of time, to undermine and destroy itself? For, wherever true Christianity spreads, it must cause diligence and frugality, which, in the natural course of things, must beget riches. And riches naturally beget pride, love of the world, and every temper that is destructive of Christianity Now, if there be no way to prevent this, Christianity is inconsistent with itself, and of consequence cannot stand, cannot continue long among any people; since, wherever it generally prevails, it saps its own foundation.

18. But is there no way to prevent this? To continue Christianity among a people? Allowing that diligence and frugality must produce riches, is there no means to hinder riches from destroying the religion of those that possess them? I can see only one possible way: find out another who can. Do you gain all you can, and save all you can? Then you must in the nature of things grow rich. Then if you have any desire to escape the damnation of hell, *give* all you can; otherwise I can have no more hope of your salvation, than of that of Judas Iscariot.

19. I call God to record upon my soul, that I advise no more than I practise. I do, blessed be God, gain, and save, and give, all I can. And so, I trust in God, I shall do, while the breath of God is in my nostrils. But what then? I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus my Lord! Still,

> "I give up every plea beside,
> Lord, I am damn'd! but thou hast died!"

Dublin, July 2, 1789

SERMON CXXI.—*On knowing Christ after the flesh.*

"Henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we did know Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more," 2 Cor. v, 16.

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1. I HAVE long desired to see something clearly and intelligibly written on these words. This is doubtless a point of no small importance; it enters deeply into the nature of religion; and yet what treatise have we in the English language, which is written upon it? Possibly there may be such: but none of them has come to my notice; no, not so much as a single sermon.

2. This is here introduced by the apostle in a very solemn manner The words literally translated, run thus: "He died for all, that they who live,"—all who live upon the earth, "might not henceforth,"—from the moment they knew him, "live unto themselves,"—seek their own honour, or profit, or pleasure,—"but unto him,"—in righteousness and true holiness, verse 15. "So that we from this time,"—we that know him by faith,—"know no one,"—either the rest of the apostles, or you, or any other person,—"after the flesh." This uncommon expression, on which the whole doctrine depends, seems to mean, we regard no man, according to his former state, his country, riches, power, or wisdom. We consider all men only in their spiritual state, and as they stand related to a better world. "Yea, if we have known even Christ after the flesh,"—which undoubtedly they had done, beholding and loving him as a man, with a natural affection,—"yet now we know him so no more." We no more know him as a man, by his face, shape, voice, or manner of conversation. We no more think of him as a man, or love him under that character.

3. The meaning, then, of this strongly figurative expression, appears to be no other than this. From the time that we are created anew in Christ Jesus, we do not think, or speak, or act, with regard to our blessed Lord, as a mere man. We do not now use any expression with relation to Christ, which may not be applied to him not only as he is man, but as he is "God over all, blessed for ever."

4. Perhaps, in order to place this in a clearer light, and at the same time to guard against dangerous errors, it may be well to instance in some of those, that in the most plain and palpable manner "know Christ after the flesh." We may rank among the first of these, the Socinians; those that flatly "deny the Lord that bought them:" who not only do not allow him to be the supreme God, but deny him to be any God at all. I believe the most eminent of these that has appeared in England, at least in the present century, was a man of great learning and uncommon abilities, Dr. John Taylor, for many years pastor at Norwich, afterwards president at the academy at Warrington. Yet it cannot be denied, that he treats our Lord with great civility; he gives him very good words; he terms him "a very worthy personage;" yea, "a man of consummate virtue."

5. Next to these are the Arians. But I would not be thought to place these in the same rank with the Socinians. There is a considerable difference between them. For whereas the former deny Christ to be any God at all, the latter do not: they only deny him to be the great God. They willingly allow, nay, contend, that he is a little God. But this is attended with a peculiar inconvenience. It totally destroys the unity of the Godhead. For, if there be a great God, and a little God, there must be two Gods. But waiving this, and keeping to the point before us. All who speak of Christ as inferior to the Father, though it be ever so little, do undoubtedly "know him after the flesh:" not as "the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of his person, as upholding," bearing up, "all things," both in heaven and earth, "by the word of his power;" the same powerful word, whereby of old time he called them all into being.

6. There are some of these who have been bold to claim that great and good man, Dr. Watts, as one of their own opinion; and in order

to prove him so, they have quoted that fine soliloquy, which is published in his posthumous works. Yet impartial men will not allow their claim, without stronger proof than has yet appeared. But if he is clear of this charge, he is not equally clear of "knowing Christ after the flesh," in another sense. I was not aware of this, but read all his works with almost equal admiration, when a person of deep piety as well as judgment, was occasionally remarking, "that some of the hymns printed in his *Horæ Lyricæ*, dedicated to divine love, were (as he phrased it) too *amorous;* and fitter to be addressed by a lover to his fellow mortal, than by a sinner to the most high God." I doubt, whether there are not some other writers, who, though they believe the Godhead of Christ, yet speak in the same unguarded manner.

7. Can we affirm, that the hymns published by a late great man, (whose memory I love and esteem,) are free from this fault? Are they not full of expressions, which strongly savour of "knowing Christ after the flesh?" Yea, and in a more gross manner, than any thing which was ever before published in the English tongue? What pity is it, that those coarse expressions, should appear in many truly spiritual hymns! How often, in the midst of excellent verses, are lines inserted which disgrace those that precede and follow! Why should not all the compositions in that book, be not only as poetical, but likewise as rational and as scriptural as many of them are acknowledged to be?

8. It was between fifty and sixty years ago, that by the gracious providence of God, my brother and I, in our voyage to America, became acquainted with the (so called) Moravian brethren. We quickly took knowledge what spirit they were of; six and twenty of them being in the same ship with us. We not only contracted much esteem, but a strong affection for them. Every day we conversed with them, and consulted them on all occasions. I translated many of their hymns, for the use of our own congregations. Indeed, as I durst not implicitly follow any man, I did not take all that lay before me; but selected those which I judged to be most scriptural, and most suitable to sound experience. Yet I am not sure, that I have taken sufficient care, to pare off every improper word or expression, every one that may seem to border on a familiarity, which does not so well suit the mouth of a worm of the earth, when addressing himself to the God of heaven. I have indeed particularly endeavoured, in all the hymns which are addressed to our blessed Lord, to avoid every *fondling* expression, and to speak as to the most high God; to him that is "in glory equal with the Father, in majesty co-eternal."

9. Some will probably think, that I have been over scrupulous, with regard to one particular word, which I never use myself either in verse or prose, in praying or preaching, though it is very frequently used by modern divines, both of the Romish and reformed churches. It is the word *dear*. Many of these frequently say, both in preaching, in prayer, and in giving thanks, "Dear Lord," or "Dear Saviour;" and my brother used the same in many of his hymns, even as long as he lived. But may I not ask, is not this using too much familiarity with the great Lord of heaven and earth? Is there any Scripture, any passage, either in the Old or New Testament, which justifies this manner of speaking? Does any of the inspired writers make use of it, even in the poetical Scriptures? Perhaps some would answer, "Yes; the apostle Paul uses it.

He says, 'God's dear Son.'" I reply, first, this does not reach the case: for the word which we render *dear*, is not here addressed *to Christ* at all, but only spoken *of him*. Therefore it is no precedent for, or justification of, our addressing it *to him*. I reply, secondly, it is not the same word. Translated literally, the sentence runs, not his dear Son, but *the Son of his love*, or *his beloved Son*. Therefore I still doubt, whether any of the inspired writers ever address the word either to the Father or the Son. Hence I cannot but advise all lovers of the Bible, if they use the expression at all, to use it very sparingly, seeing the Scripture affords neither command nor precedent for it. And surely, "if any man speak," either in preaching or prayer, he should "speak as the oracles of God."

10. Do we not frequently use this unscriptural expression, concerning our blessed Lord, in private conversation also? And are we not then especially apt to speak of him as a mere man? Particularly when we are describing his sufferings, how easily do we slide into this? We do well to be cautious in this matter. Here is not room for indulging a warm imagination. I have sometimes almost scrupled singing, (even in the midst of my brother's excellent hymn,) "That dear disfigured face;" or that glowing expression, "Drop thy warm blood upon my heart;" lest it should seem to imply the forgetting, I am speaking of "the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts." Although he so "humbled himself as to take upon him the form of a servant, to be found in fashion as a man;" yea, though he "was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;" yet, let it ever be remembered, that "he thought it not robbery to be equal with God:" And let our hearts still cry out, "Thou art exceedingly glorious; thou art clothed with majesty and honour."

11. Perhaps some may be afraid, lest the refraining from these warm expressions, or even gently checking them, should check the fervour of our devotion. It is very possible it may check, or even prevent, some kind of fervour which has passed for devotion. Possibly it may prevent loud shouting, horrid, unnatural screaming, repeating the same words twenty or thirty times, jumping two or three feet high, and throwing about the arms or legs, both of men and women, in a manner shocking not only to religion, but to common decency:—But it will never check, much less prevent, true, scriptural devotion. It will rather enliven the prayer that is properly addressed to Him, who, though he was very man, yet was very God: who, though he was born of a woman, to redeem man; yet was God from everlasting, and world without end.

12. And let it not be thought, that the "knowing Christ after the flesh," the considering him as a mere man, and, in consequence, using such language in public as well as private, as is suitable to those conceptions of him, is a thing of a purely indifferent nature, or, however, of no great moment. On the contrary, the using this improper familiarity with God our Creator, our Redeemer, our Governor, is naturally productive of very evil fruits. And that not only in those that speak, but also to those that hear them. It has a direct tendency to abate that tender reverence due to the Lord their Governor. It insensibly damps

> "That speechless awe which dares not move,
> And all the silent heaven of love."

It is impossible we should accustom ourselves to this odious and indecent familiarity with our Maker, while we preserve in our minds a lively sense of what is painted so strongly in those solemn lines:

> "Dark, with excessive bright, his skirts appear,
> Yet dazzle heaven, that brightest seraphim
> Approach not, but with both wings veil their eyes."

13. Now, would not every sober Christian sincerely desire, constantly to experience such a love to his Redeemer, (seeing he is God as well as man,) as is mixed with angelic fear? Is it not this very temper which good Dr. Watts so well expresses in those lines:

> "Thy mercy never shall remove
> From men of heart sincere:
> Thou sav'st the souls, whose humble love
> Is join'd with holy fear."

14. Not that I would recommend a cold, dead, formal prayer, out of which both love and desire, hope and fear, are excluded. Such seems to have been "the calm and undisturbed method of prayer," so strongly recommended by the late bishop Hoadly, which occasioned for some years so violent a contest in the religious world. Is it not probable, that the well meaning bishop had met with some of the Mystics or Quietists; (such as Madam Guion, or the archbishop of Cambray;) and that, having no experience of these things, he patched together a theory of his own, as nearly resembling theirs as he could? But it is certain, nothing is farther from apathy than real scriptural devotion. It excites, exercises, and gives full scope to all our nobler passions; and excludes none but those that are wild, irrational, and beneath the dignity of man.

15. But how then can we account for this, that so many holy men, men of truly elevated affections, not excepting pious Kempis himself, have so frequently used this manner of speaking, these *fondling* kinds of expression; since we cannot doubt but they are truly pious men? It is allowed they were; but we do not allow that their judgment was equal to their piety. And hence it was that their really good affections a little exceeded the bounds of reason, and led them into a manner of speaking, not authorized by the oracles of God. And surely these are the true standard, both of our affections and our language. But did ever any of the holy men of old speak thus, either in the Old or in the New Testament? Did Daniel, the "man greatly beloved," ever thus express himself to God? Or did "the disciple whom Jesus loved," and who doubtless loved his Master with the strongest affection, leave us an example of addressing him thus? Even when he was on the verge of glory? Even then his concluding words were not *fond*, but solemn, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

16. The sum of all is, We are to "honour the Son even as we honour the Father." We are to pay him the same worship as we pay to the Father. We are to love him with all our heart and soul; and to consecrate all we have and are, all we think, speak, and do, to the three-one God, Father, Son, and Spirit, world without end!

Plymouth Dock, August 15, 1789.

Sermon CXXII.—*On a single eye, &c.*

"If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. Therefore, if the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" Matt. vi, 22, 23.

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1. "Simplicity and purity," says a devout man, "are the two wings that lift the soul up to heaven: simplicity, which is in the intention, and purity, which is in the affections." The former of these, that great and good man, bishop Taylor, recommends with much earnestness, in the beginning of his excellent book, "Rules of Holy Living and Dying." He sets out with insisting upon this, as the very first point in true religion, and warns us, that without this, all our endeavours after it will be vain and ineffectual. The same truth, that strong and elegant writer, Mr. Law, earnestly presses in his "Serious Call to a Devout Life:" a treatise which will hardly be excelled, if it be equalled, in the English tongue, either for beauty of expression, or for justness and depth of thought. And who can censure any follower of Christ, for laying ever so great stress on this point, that considers the manner wherein our Master recommends it, in the words above recited?

2. Let us attentively consider this whole passage, as it may be literally translated. "The eye is the lamp of the body:" And what the eye is to the body, the intention is to the soul. We may observe, with what exact propriety our Lord places simplicity of intention, between worldly desires, and worldly cares; either of which directly tend to destroy it. It follows, "If thine eye be single," singly fixed upon God, "thy whole body," that is, all thy soul, "shall be full of light;" shall be filled with holiness and happiness. "But if thine eye be evil,"—not single, aiming at any other object, seeking any thing beneath the sun,—"thy whole body shall be full of darkness. And if the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" How remote, not only from all real knowledge, but from all real holiness and happiness.

3. Considering these things, we may well cry out, how great a thing is it to be a Christian; to be a real, inward, scriptural Christian, conformed in heart and life to the will of God! Who is sufficient for these things? None, unless he be born of God. I do not wonder, that one of the most sensible deists should say, "I think the Bible is the finest book I ever read in my life; yet I have an insuperable objection to it: it is *too good*. It lays down such a plan of life, such a scheme of doctrine and practice, as is far too excellent for weak silly men to aim at, or attempt to copy after." All this is most true, upon any other than the scriptural hypothesis. But this being allowed, all the difficulty vanishes into air. For, if "all things are possible with God; then all things are possible to him that believeth."

4. But let us consider, first, The former part of our Lord's declaration: "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light:" secondly, The latter part: "If thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness:" and, thirdly, The dreadful state of those whose eye is not single: "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"

I. 1. And first, "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." If thine eye be single; if God be in all thy thoughts; if thou art constantly aiming at him that is invisible; if it be thy intention in all things, small and great, in all thy conversation to please God, to do, not thy own will, but the will of him that sent thee into the world; if thou canst say not to any creature, but to him that made thee for himself, "I view thee, Lord and end of my desires;"—then the promise will certainly take place: "Thy whole body shall be full of light:" thy whole soul shall be filled with the light of heaven; with the glory of the Lord resting upon thee. In all thy actions and conversation, thou shalt have not only the testimony of a good conscience towards God, but likewise of his Spirit, bearing witness with thy spirit, that all thy ways are acceptable to him.

2. When thy soul is full of this light, thou wilt be able (according to St. Paul's direction to the Thessalonians) to "rejoice evermore, to pray without ceasing, and in every thing to give thanks." For who can be constantly sensible of the loving presence of God, without "rejoicing ever more?" Who can have the loving eye of his soul perpetually fixed upon God, but he will "pray without ceasing?" For his "heart is unto God without a voice, and his silence speaketh unto him." Who can be sensible that this loving Father is well pleased with all he does and suffers, but he will be constrained, "in every thing to give thanks?" knowing that all things "work together for good."

3. Thus shall "his whole body be full of light." The light of knowledge is doubtless one thing here intended; arising from "the unction of the Holy One, which abideth with him, and teacheth him of all things:" all the things which it is now necessary for him to know, in order to please God. Hereby he will have a clear knowledge of the divine will in every circumstance of life. Not without the means, but in the use of all those means, which God has furnished him with. And, walking in this light, he cannot but "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." He will continually advance in all holiness, and in the whole image of God.

II. 1. Our Lord observes, secondly, "If thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness." If it be evil, that is, not single, (for the eye which is not single, is evil,) "thy whole body shall be full of darkness." It is certain there can be no medium between a single eye, and an evil eye: for whenever we are not aiming at God, we are seeking happiness in some creature. And this, whatever that creature may be, is no less than idolatry. It is all one, whether we aim at the pleasures of sense, the pleasures of the imagination, the praise of men, or riches; all which St. John comprises under that general expression, "the love of the world." The eye is evil, if we aim at any of these, or indeed, at any thing under the sun. So far as you aim at any of these, indeed, at any thing beneath God, your whole soul and the whole course of your life, will be full of darkness. Ignorance of yourselves, ignorance of your real interest, ignorance of your relation to God, will surround you with impenetrable clouds, with darkness that may be felt. And so long as the eye of your soul rests upon all or any of these, those will continue to surround your soul, and cover it with utter darkness.

2. With how many instances of this melancholy truth, that those whose eye is not single are totally ignorant of the nature of true religion,

are we surrounded on every side! How many, even of good sort of people, of them whose lives are innocent, are as ignorant of themselves, of God, and of worshipping him in spirit and in truth, as either Mohammedans or heathens! And yet they are not any way defective in natural understanding. And some of them have improved their natural abilities by a liberal education, whereby they have laid in a considerable stock of deep and various learning. Yet how totally ignorant are they of God, and of the things of God! How unacquainted both with the invisible and the eternal world! Oh why do they continue in this deplorable ignorance? It is the plain effect of this,—their eye is not single. They do not aim at God: he is not in all their thoughts. They do not desire or think of heaven; therefore they sink deep as hell.

3. For this reason they are as far from holiness, as they are from valuable knowledge. It is because their eye is not single that they are such strangers to vital religion. Let them be ever so accomplished in other respects; let them be ever so learned, ever so well versed in every branch of polite literature; yea, ever so courteous, so humane; yet if their eye be not singly fixed on God, they can know nothing of scriptural religion. They do not even know what Christian holiness means; what is the entrance of it, *the new birth*, with all the circumstances attending it: they know no more of this, than do the beasts of the field. Do they repent and believe the gospel? How much less are they "renewed in the spirit of their minds," in the image of him that created them? As they have not the least experience of this, so they have not the least conception of it. Were you to name such a thing, you might expect to hear, "Much religion hath made thee mad:" so destitute are they, whatever accomplishments they have beside, of the only religion which avails with God.

4. And till their eye is single, they are as far remote from happiness as from holiness. They may now and then have agreeable dreams, from

> "Wealth, honour, pleasure, or what else
> This short-enduring world can give:"

But none of these can satisfy the appetite of an immortal soul. Nay, all of them together cannot give rest, which is the lowest ingredient of happiness, to a never dying spirit, which God created for the enjoyment of himself. The hungry soul, like the busy bee, wanders from flower to flower; but it goes off from each, with an abortive hope, and a deluded expectation. Every creature cries, (some with a loud and others with a secret voice,) "happiness is not in *me*." The height and the depth, proclaim to an attentive ear, "the Creator hath not implanted in me a capacity of giving happiness: therefore, with all thy skill and pains, thou canst not extract it from me." And indeed the more pains any of the children of men take, to extract it from any earthly object, the greater will their chagrin be,—the more secure their disappointment.

5. But although the vulgar herd of mankind can find no happiness; although it cannot be found in the empty pleasures of the world; may it not be found in learning, even by him that has not a single eye? Surely

> "Content of spirit must from science flow;
> For 'tis a god-like attribute to know."

By no means. On the contrary it has been the observation of all ages, that the men who possessed the greatest learning, were the most dissatisfied of all men. This occasioned a person of eminent learning to declare, "A fool may find a kind of paradise upon earth, [although this is a grand mistake,] but a wise man can find none." These are the most discontented, the most impatient of men. Indeed, learning naturally effects this: "knowledge," as the apostle observes, "puffeth up." But where pride is, happiness is not: they are utterly inconsistent with each other. So much ground there is for that melancholy reflection, wherever true religion is not:

> "Avails it then, oh reason, to be wise?
> To see this mournful sight with quicker eyes?
> To know with more distinction to complain,
> And have superior sense in feeling pain?"

III. 1. It remains to consider, in the third place, our Lord's important question: "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" The plain meaning is, if that principle which ought to give light to thy whole soul, as the eye does to the body; to direct thy understanding, passions, affections, tempers, all thy thoughts, words, and actions; if this principle itself be darkened,—be set wrong and put darkness for light;—how great must that darkness be! how terrible its effects!

2. In order to see this in a stronger point of view, let us consider it in a few particular instances. Begin with one of no small importance. Here is a father choosing an employment for his son. If his eye be not single; if he do not singly aim at the glory of God in the salvation of his soul; if it be not his one consideration, what calling is likely to secure him the highest place in heaven; not the largest share of earthly treasure, or the highest preferment in the church;—the light which is in him is manifestly darkness. And oh how great is that darkness! The mistake which he is in, is not a little one, but inexpressibly great. What! do not you prefer his being a cobbler on earth, and a glorious saint in heaven, before his being a lord on earth, and a damned spirit in hell? If not, how great, unutterably great, is the darkness that covers your soul! What a fool, what a dolt, what a madman is he, how stupid beyond all expression, who judges a palace upon earth to be preferable to a throne in heaven! How unspeakably is his understanding darkened, who, to gain for his child the honour that cometh of men, will entail upon him everlasting shame in the company of the devil and his angels!

3. I cannot dismiss this subject yet, as it is of the utmost importance. How great is the darkness of that execrable wretch, (I can give him no better title, be he rich or poor,) who will sell his own child to the devil; who will barter her own eternal happiness for any quantity of gold or silver! What a monster would any man be accounted, who devoured the flesh of his own offspring! And is not he as great a monster, who, by his own act and deed, gives her to be devoured by that roaring lion? As he certainly does, (so far as is in his power,) who marries her to an ungodly man. "But he is rich; but he has ten thousand pounds!" What if it were a hundred thousand? The more the worse; the less probability will she have of escaping the damnation of hell. With what face wilt thou look upon her, when she tells thee in

the realms below, "Thou hast plunged me into this place of torment Hadst thou given me to a good man, however poor, I might have now been in Abraham's bosom. But, oh! what have riches profited me! They have sunk both me and thee into hell!"

4. Are any of you that are called Methodists, thus merciful to your children? Seeking to *marry them well;* (as the *cant* phrase is;) that is, to sell them to some purchaser that has much money, but little or no religion? Is then the light that is in *you* also darkness? Are ye, too regarding God less than mammon? Are ye also without understanding? Have ye profited no more by all ye have heard? Man, woman, think what ye are about! Dare *you* also sell your child to the devil? You undoubtedly do this, (as far as in you lies,) when you marry a son or a daughter, to a child of the devil; though it be one that wallows in gold and silver. Oh take warning in time! Beware of the gilded bait! Death and hell are hid beneath. Prefer grace before gold and precious stones; glory in heaven, to riches on earth! If you do not, you are worse than the very Canaanites. They only made their children pass "through the fire" to Moloch. You make yours *pass into the fire* that shall never be quenched, and to stay in it for ever! Oh how great is the darkness that causes you, after you have done this, to "wipe your mouth and say, you have done no evil!"

5. Let us consider another case, not far distant from this. Suppose a young man, having finished his studies at the university, is desirous to minister in holy things, and accordingly enters into orders. What is his intention in this? What is the end he proposes to himself? If his eye be single, his one design is to save his own soul, and them that hear him; to bring as many sinners as he possibly can out of darkness into marvellous light. If, on the other hand, his eye be not single, if he aim at ease, honour, money, or preferment; the world may account him a wise man, but God says unto him "Thou fool!" And while the light that is in him is thus darkness, "how great is that darkness!" What folly is comparable to his folly! One peculiarly dedicated to the God of heaven, to "mind earthly things!" A worldly clergyman is a fool, above all fools; a madman, above all madmen! Such vile, infamous wretches as these, are the real "ground of the contempt of the clergy." Indolent clergymen, pleasure taking clergymen, money loving clergymen, praise loving clergymen, preferment seeking clergymen; these are the wretches that cause the order in general to be contemned. These are the pests of the Christian world; the grand nuisance of mankind; a stink in the nostrils of God! Such as these were they, who made St. Chrysostom to say, "Hell is paved with the souls of Christian priests."

6. Take another case. Suppose a young woman of an independent fortune, to be addressed at the same time by a man of wealth, without religion, and a man of religion, without wealth; in other words, by a rich child of the devil, and a poor child of God. What shall we say, if, other circumstances being equal, she prefer the rich man to the good man? It is plain, her eye is not single; therefore her foolish heart is darkened: and how great is that darkness, which makes her judge gold and silver a greater recommendation than holiness! Which makes a child of the devil, with money, appear more amiable to her than a child of God without it! What words can sufficiently express the inexcusable

folly of such a choice! What a laughing stock (unless she severely repent) will she be to all the devils in hell, when her wealthy companion has dragged her down to his own place of torment!

7. Are there any of you, that are present before God, who are concerned in any of these matters? Give me leave, with "great plainness of speech," to apply to your consciences "in the sight of God." You, whom God hath entrusted with sons or daughters, is your eye single in choosing partners for them? What qualifications do you seek in your sons and daughters in law? Religion or riches? Which is your first consideration? Are you not of the old heathen's mind,

Quærenda pecunia primum,
Virtus post nummos?

"Seek money first: let virtue then be sought."

Bring the matter to a point. Which will you prefer? A rich heathen, or a pious Christian? A child of the devil, with an estate; or the child of God, without it? A lord or gentleman, with the devil in his heart. (he does not hide it: his speech bewrayeth him;) or a tradesman, who, you have reason to believe, has Christ dwelling in his heart? Oh how great is that darkness which makes you prefer a child of the devil to a child of God! Which causes you to prefer the poor trash of worldly wealth, which flies as a shadow, to the riches of eternal glory!

8. I call upon you more especially who are called Methodists. In the sight of the great God, upwards of fifty years I have administered unto you, I have been your servant for Christ's sake. During this time I have given you many solemn warnings on this head. I now give you one more, perhaps the last. Dare any of you, in choosing your calling or situation, eye the things on earth, rather than the things above? In choosing a profession, or a companion for life, for your child, do you look at earth or heaven? And can you deliberately prefer, either for yourself or your offspring, a child of the devil with money, to a child of God without it? Why the very heathens cry out;

O curvæ in terras animæ, et celestium inanes!
Oh souls bowed down to earth, strangers to heaven.

Repent, repent of your vile earthly mindedness! Renounce the title of Christians, or prefer, both in your own case, and the case of your children, grace to money, and heaven to earth! For the time to come, at least, let "your eye be single," that your "whole body may be full of light!"

Bristol, Sept. 25, 1789.

SERMON CXXIII.—*On Worldly Folly.*

"But God said unto him, Thou fool!" Luke xii, 20.

BUT one of these fools is commonly wiser in his own eyes "than seven men that can render a reason." If it were possible for a Christian, for one that has the mind which was in Christ, to despise any one, he would cordially despise those, who suppose "they are the men, and wisdom shall die with them." You may see one of these, painted to the life in the verses preceding the text 'The ground of a certain rich

man," says our blessed Lord, "brought forth plenteously," verse 16, &c. "And he reasoned within himself, saying, What shall I do? for I have no room where to bestow my fruits. And he said, This will I do, I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: take thy ease; eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool!" I propose by the assistance of God,

I. To open and explain these few words; and,

II. To apply them to your consciences.

I. 1. To open and explain them. A little before, our Lord had been giving a solemn caution to one who spoke to him about dividing his inheritance. "Beware of covetousness: for the life of a man," that is, the happiness of it, "does not consist in the abundance of the things that he possesseth." To prove and illustrate this weighty truth, our Lord relates this remarkable story. It is not improbable, it was one that had lately occurred, and that was fresh in the memory of some that were present. "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plenteously." The riches of the ancients consisted chiefly in the fruits of the earth. "And he said within himself, What shall I do?" The very language of want and distress! The voice of one that is afflicted, and groaning under his burden. What shalt thou do? Why, are not those at the door, whom God hath appointed to receive what thou canst spare? What shalt thou do? Why, *disperse* abroad, and give to the poor. Feed the hungry. Clothe the naked. Be a father to the fatherless, and a husband to the widow. Freely thou hast received; freely give. Oh no! He is wiser than this comes to: he knows better than so.

2. "And he said, This will I do;"—without asking God's leave, or thinking about him any more than if there were no God in heaven or on earth;—"I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my goods and all my fruits." *My* fruits! They are as much thine as the clouds that fly over thy head! As much as the winds that blow around thee; which, doubtless, thou canst hold in thy fists! "And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years!" "Soul, thou hast much goods!" Are then corn, and wine, and oil, the goods of an immortal spirit? "Laid up for many years!" Who told thee so! Believe him not; he was a liar from the beginning. He could not prolong thy life if he would. (God alone is the giver of life and death.) And he would not, if he could; but would immediately drag thee to his own sad abode. "Soul, take thy ease; eat, drink, and be merry!" How replete with folly and madness is every part of this wonderful soliloquy! "Eat and drink!" Will thy spirit then eat and drink? Yea, but not of earthly food. Thou wilt soon eat livid flame; and drink of the lake of fire burning with brimstone. But wilt thou then drink and be merry? Nay, there will be no mirth in those horrid shades. Those caverns will resound with no music, but "weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth!"

3. But while he was applauding his own wisdom, "God said unto him, Thou fool! this night shall thy soul be required of thee. And then whose shall those things be, which thou hast prepared?"

4. Let us consider his words a little more attentively. He said within himself, "What shall I do?" And is not the answer ready?

Do good. Do all the good thou canst. Let thy plenty supply thy neighbour's wants; and thou wilt never want something to do. Canst thou find none that need the necessaries of life? That are pinched with cold or hunger? None that have not raiment to put on? or a place where to lay their heads? None that are wasted with pining sickness? None that are languishing in prison? If you duly considered our Lord's words, "The poor have you always with you;" you would no more ask, "What shall I do?"

5. How different was the purpose of this poor madman? "I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my goods." You may just as well bury them in the earth, or cast them into the sea. This will just as well answer the end, for which God entrusted thee with them.

6. But let us examine a little farther the remaining part of his resolution. "I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: take thy ease, eat, drink, and be merry." What, are these the goods of a never dying spirit? As well may thy body feed on the fleeting breeze, as thy soul on earthly fruits. Excellent counsel then to such a spirit, to eat and drink! to a spirit made equal to angels, made an incorruptible picture of the God of glory, to feed not on corruptible things, but on the fruit of the tree of life, which grows in the midst of the paradise of God.

7. It is no marvel then, that God should say unto him, "Thou fool!" For this terrible reason, were there no other: "This night shall thy soul be required of thee!"

"And art thou born to die,
To lay this body down?
And must thy trembling spirit fly
Into a land unknown?
A land of deepest shade,
Unpierced by human thought;
The dreary regions of the dead,
Where all things are forgot?"

"And whose then shall all the things be which thou hast provided?"

II. 1. The second thing which I proposed was, to apply these considerations; which, it is certain, are some of the most important that can enter into the heart of man. In one sense, indeed, they have been applied already; for, what has been said, has been all application. But I wish every one who reads or hears these words, directly to apply them to his own soul.

2. Does it not concern every one that hears,—"The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully," to inquire, Was this ever the case with *me*? Have I now, or have I ever heretofore, had more worldly goods given than I wanted? And what were my thoughts upon the occasion? Did I say in my heart, What shall I do? Was I distressed by my abundance? Did I think, "I have much goods laid up for many years?" Many years! Alas! what is thy life, if protracted to its utmost span? Is it not a vapour, that just appeareth, and vanisheth away? Say not then, I will pull down my barns; but say to God, in the secret of thy heart, "Lord, save, or I perish." See, my riches increase; let me not set my heart upon them! Thou seest I stand upon slippery ground; do thou undertake for me!

"Uphold me Saviour, or I fall!
Oh reach me forth thy gracious hand;
Only for help on thee I call!
Only by faith in thee I stand!"

See, Lord, how greatly my substance increases! Nothing less than thy almighty power can prevent my setting my heart upon it, and being crushed lower than the grave!

3. I ask thee, oh Lord, "What shall I do?" First of all, endeavour to be deeply sensible of thy danger; and make it matter of earnest and constant prayer, that thou mayest never lose that sense of it. Pray that thou mayest always feel thyself standing on the brink of a precipice. Meantime let the language of thy heart be, "Having more means, I will do more good, by the grace of God, than ever I did before. All the additional goods, which it hath pleased God to put into my hands, I am resolved to lay out with all diligence, in additional works of mercy. And hereby I shall 'lay up for myself a sure foundation, that I may attain eternal life.'"

4. Thou no longer talkest of *thy* goods, or *thy* fruits, knowing they are not thine, but God's. The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof: He is the proprietor of heaven and earth. He cannot divest himself of his glory: he must be the Lord, the possessor of all that is. Only he hath left a portion of his goods in thy hands, for such uses as he has specified. How long he will be pleased to lodge them with thee, thou dost not yet know: perhaps only till to morrow, or to night. Therefore talk not, think not, of many years. Knowest thou not, that thou art a creature of a day, that is crushed before the moth? That the breath which is in thy nostrils may be taken away at a moment's warning? That it may be resumed by him that gave it, at a time thou thinkest not of it? How knowest thou, but the next time thou liest down on thy bed, thou mayest hear, "This night shall thy soul be required of thee."

5. Is not thy life as unstable as a cloud; fluctuating, as a bubble on the water? It fleeth as it were a shadow, and never continueth in one stay. "Many years!" Who is sure of one day? And is it not an instance both of the wisdom and goodness of God, that he holds thy breath in his own hand, and deals it out from moment to moment; that thou mayest always remember, to "live each day, as if it were the last?" And after the few days thou shalt have spent under the sun, how soon will it be said,

"A heap of dust is all remains of thee;
'Tis all thou art, and all the proud shall be."

6. Consider again, the exquisite folly of that saying, "Soul, thou hast much goods." Are then the products of the earth, food for a heaven born spirit? Is there any composition of earth and water, yea, though air and fire be added thereto, which can feed those beings of a higher order? What similitude is there between those ethereal spirits, and these base born clods of earth? Examine the rest of this wise soliloquy, and see how it will apply to yourself. "Soul, take thy ease!" Oh vain hope! Can ease to a spirit spring out of the ground? Suppose the soil were ever so improved, can it yield such a harvest? "Eat, drink, and be merry!" What! can thy soul eat and drink

"Manna such as angels eat,
Pure delights for spirits fit?"

But these do not grow on earthly ground; they are only found in the paradise of God.

7. But suppose the voice which commands life and death pronounce, "This night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose are all those things thou hast provided?" Alas, they are not thine! Thou hast no longer any part or lot in any of the things that are under the sun. Thou hast then no more share in any of these things of earth, than if the earth and the works of it were burned up. Naked thou camest out of thy mother's womb, and naked shalt thou return. Thou hast heaped up many things; but for what end? To leave them all behind thee! Poor shade! Thou art now stripped of all: not even hope is left.

8. Observe the remark, which our Lord has left upon the whole occurrence: "*So is* every one who layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God!" Such a fool, such an egregious madman, as it is beyond the power of language to express! However wise he may be in his own eyes, and perhaps in those of his neighbour, he is in reality the greatest fool under heaven, who heapeth up things from which he must soon be separated for ever: and whoever is seeking happiness in the things that perish, is laying up treasure for himself This is absolutely inconsistent with *being* "rich [or rather *growing*] towards God;" with obeying that scriptural command,—"My son, give me thy heart." He who is a child of God can truly say,—

> "All my riches are above;
> All my treasure is thy love:"

He can testify, "All my desire is unto thee, and to the remembrance of thy name!"

9. Let every one who readeth these words, narrowly search his own heart. Where hast thou laid up thy treasure hitherto? Where art thou laying it up now? Art thou labouring to be rich towards God? Or to lay up earthly goods? Which takes up the greater part of thy thoughts? Thou that art careful for outward things, diligent in doing good, and exact in outward duties,—beware of covetousness; of decent, honourable love of money; and of a desire to lay up treasures on earth. Lay up treasures in heaven! A few days hence, thou wilt step into a land of darkness; where earthly fruits will be of no avail; where thou wilt not be capable of eating and drinking, or gratifying any of thy senses: what benefit wilt thou then receive from all thou hast laid up in this world? What satisfaction in all which thou hast treasured up, all thou hast left behind thee? Left behind thee! What, couldst thou then take nothing with thee into the everlasting habitations? Nay then, lay up treasure, before thou go hence, which fadeth not away!

Balam, February 19, 1790.

SERMON CXXIV.—*On the Wedding Garment.*

"How camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment,' Matt. xxii, 12.

1. IN the verses preceding the text we read, "After these things, Jesus spake to them again in parables, and said, A certain king made a supper for his son. And when the king came in to see the guests,

he saw one who had not on a wedding garment. And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

2. Upon this parable one of our most celebrated expositors comments in the following manner: "The design of this parable is to set forth that gracious supply made by God to men in and by the preaching of the gospel. To invite them to this, God sent forth his servants, the prophets and apostles."—And on these words,—"Why camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment," he proceeds thus: "The punishment of whom ought not to discourage us, or make us turn our backs upon the holy ordinances." Certainly it ought not; but nothing of this kind can be inferred from this parable; which has no reference to the ordinances, any more than to baptism and marriage. And probably we should never have imagined it, but that the word *supper* occurred therein.

3. However, most of the English annotators have fallen into the same mistake with Mr. Burkitt. And so have thousands of their readers. Yet a mistake it certainly is. And such a mistake as has not any shadow of foundation in the text. It is true, indeed, that none ought to approach the Lord's table without at least habitual preparation: that is, a firm purpose to keep all the commandments of God, and a sincere desire to receive all his promises. But that obligation cannot be inferred from this text, though it may from many other passages of Scripture. But there is no need of multiplying texts; one is as good as a thousand: there needs no more to induce any man of a tender conscience to communicate at all opportunities, than that single commandment of our Lord, "Do this in remembrance of me."

4. But, whatever preparation is necessary in order to our being worthy partakers of the Lord's supper, it has no relation at all to the "wedding garment," mentioned in this parable. It cannot: for that commemoration of his death was not then ordained. It relates wholly to the proceedings of our Lord, when he comes in the clouds of heaven, to judge the quick and the dead; and to the qualifications which will then be necessary, to their inheriting "the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world."

5. Many excellent men, who are thoroughly apprized of this, who are convinced, the wedding garment here mentioned is not to be understood of any qualifications for the Lord's supper, but of the qualification for glory, interpret it of the righteousness of Christ; which, say they, is "The sole qualification for heaven: this being the only righteousness wherein any man can stand in the day of the Lord." For who, they ask, will then dare to appear before the great God, save in the righteousness of his well beloved Son? Shall we not then at least, if not before, find the need of having a better righteousness than our own? And what other can that be, than the righteousness of God our Saviour?" The late pious and ingenious Mr. Hervey descants largely upon this; particularly in his elaborate dialogues between Theron and Aspasio.

6. Another elegant writer, now I trust with God, speaks strongly to the same effect, in the preface to his comment on St. Paul's Epistle to

the Romans: "We certainly," says he, "shall need a better righteousness than our own, wherein to stand at the bar of God in the day of judgment." I do not understand the expression. Is it scriptural? Do we read it in the Bible? Either in the Old Testament or the New? I doubt, it is an unscriptural, awkward phrase, which has no determinate meaning. If you mean by that odd, uncouth question, "In whose righteousness are you to stand at the last day,"—For *whose sake*, or *by whose merit*, do you expect to enter into the glory of God? I answer, without the least hesitation, For the sake of Jesus Christ, the righteous. It is through his merits alone that all believers are saved: that is, justified,—saved from the guilt,—sanctified,—saved from the nature of sin; and glorified,—taken into heaven.

7. It may be worth our while, to spend a few more words on this important point. Is it possible to devise a more unintelligible expression than this,—"In what righteousness are we to stand before God at the last day?" Why do you not speak plainly, and say, "*For whose sake* do you look to be saved?" Any plain peasant would then readily answer; "For the sake of Jesus Christ." But all those dark, ambiguous phrases tend only to puzzle the cause, and open a way for unwary hearers to slide into Antinomianism.

8. Is there any expression similar to this, of the wedding garment, to be found in the Holy Scripture? In the Revelation we find mention made of "linen, white and clean, which is the righteousness of the saints." And this too, many vehemently contend, means the righteousness of Christ. But how then are we to reconcile this with that passage in the seventh chapter: "They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb!" Will they say, "The righteousness of Christ was washed and made white in the blood of Christ?" Away with such Antinomian jargon! Is not the plain meaning this: it was from the atoning blood, that the very righteousness of the saints derived its value and acceptableness with God?

9. In the nineteenth chapter of the Revelation, at the ninth verse, there is an expression which comes much nearer to this:—"The wedding supper of the Lamb." There is a nearer resemblance between this, and the marriage feast mentioned in the parable. Yet they are not altogether the same: there is a clear difference between them. The supper mentioned in the parable, belongs to the church militant; that mentioned in the Revelation, to the church triumphant. The one, to the kingdom of God on earth; the other, to the kingdom of God in heaven. Accordingly, in the former, there may be found those who have not a "wedding garment." But there will be none such to be found in the latter. No, not "in that great multitude which no man can number, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." They will all be "kings and priests unto God, and shall reign with him for ever and ever."

10. Does not that expression, "The righteousness of the saints," point out, what is the "wedding garment" in the parable? It is the "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord." The righteousness of Christ is, doubtless, necessary for any soul that enters into glory. But so is personal holiness, too, for every child of man. But it is highly needful to be observed, that they are necessary in different respects. The former is necessary to *entitle* us to heaven; the latter

to *qualify* us for it. Without the righteousness of Christ we could have no *claim* to glory; without holiness, we could have no *fitness* for it. By the former we become members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven. By the latter, "we are made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

11. From the very time that the Son of God delivered this weighty truth to the children of men, That all who had not the "wedding garment" would be "cast into outer darkness, where are weeping and gnashing of teeth," the enemy of souls has been labouring to obscure it, that they might still seek death in the error of their life; and many ways has he tried to disguise the holiness, without which we cannot be saved. How many things have been palmed, even upon the Christian world, in the place of this! Some of these are utterly contrary thereto, and subversive of it. Some were no ways connected with, or related to it; but useless and insignificant trifles. Others might be deemed to be some part of it, but by no means the whole. It may be of use to enumerate some of them, lest ye should be ignorant of Satan's devices.

12. Of the first sort, things prescribed as Christian holiness, although flatly contrary thereto, is idolatry. How has this, in various shapes, been taught, and is to this day, as essential to holiness? How diligently is it now circulated, in a great part of the Christian church? Some of their idols are silver and gold, or wood and stone, "graven by art, and man's device:" some, men of like passions with themselves; particularly the apostles of our Lord, and the virgin Mary. To these they add numberless saints of their own creation, with no small company of angels.

13. Another thing as directly contrary to the whole tenor of true religion, is, what is diligently taught in many parts of the Christian church: I mean, the spirit of persecution: of persecuting their brethren even unto death. So that the earth has been covered with blood by those who were called Christians, in order to "make their calling and election sure." It is true, many even in the church of Rome, who were taught this horrid doctrine, now seem to be ashamed of it. But have the heads of that community as openly and explicitly renounced that capital doctrine of devils, as they avowed it in the council of Constance, and practised it for many ages? Till they have done this, they will be chargeable with the blood of Jerome of Prague, basely murdered, and of many thousands, both in the sight of God and man.

14. Let it not be said, "this does not concern us Protestants: we think and let think. We abhor the spirit of persecution, and maintain, as an indisputable truth, that every rational creature has a right to worship God, as he is persuaded in his own mind." But are we true to our own principles? So far, that we do not use fire and faggot. We do not persecute unto blood, those that do not subscribe to our opinions. Blessed be God, the laws of our country do not allow of this: but is there no such thing to be found in England as domestic persecution? The saying or doing any thing unkind to another for following his own conscience, is a species of persecution. Now, are we all clear of this? Is there no husband who, in this sense, persecutes his wife? who uses her unkindly, in word or deed, for worshipping God after her own conscience? Do no parents thus persecute their children? no

masters or mistresses, their servants? If they do this, and think they do God service therein, they must not cast the first stone at the Roman Catholics.

15. When things of an indifferent nature are represented as necessary to salvation, it is a folly of the same kind, though not of the same magnitude. Indeed it is not a little sin, to represent trifles as necessary to salvation; such as going of pilgrimages, or any thing that is not expressly enjoined in the holy Scripture. Among these we may undoubtedly rank orthodoxy, or right opinions. We know indeed that wrong opinions in religion naturally lead to wrong tempers, or wrong practices; and that, consequently, it is our bounden duty to pray, that we may have a right judgment in all things. But still a man may judge as accurately as the devil, and yet be as wicked as he.

16. Something more excusable are they who imagine holiness to consist in things that are only a part of it: (that is, when they are connected with the rest; otherwise they are no part of it at all:) suppose in doing no harm. And how exceeding common is this? How many take holiness and harmlessness to mean one and the same thing? Whereas were a man as harmless as a post, he might be as far from holiness as heaven from earth. Suppose a man, therefore, to be exactly honest, to pay every one his own, to cheat no man, to wrong no man, to hurt no man, to be just in all his dealings; suppose a woman to be uniformly modest and virtuous in all her words and actions; suppose the one and the other to be steady practisers of morality, that is, of justice, mercy, and truth;—yet all this, though it is good, as far as it goes, is but a part of Christian holiness. Yea, suppose a person of this amiable character to do much good, wherever he is, to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, relieve the stranger, the sick, the prisoner; yea, and to save many souls from death, it is possible he may still fall far short of that holiness, without which he cannot see the Lord.

17. What then is that holiness, which is the true wedding garment, the only qualification for glory? "In Christ Jesus" (that is, according to the Christian institution, whatever be the case of the heathen world;) "neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor unciscumcision; but a new creation:" the renewal of the soul "in the image of God wherein it was created." In "Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love." It first, through the energy of God, worketh love to God and all mankind; and by this love, every holy and heavenly temper. In particular, lowliness, meekness, gentleness, temperance, and long suffering. "It is neither circumcision,"—the attending on all the Christian ordinances, —"nor uncircumcision,"—the fulfilling of all heathen morality,—but "the keeping the commandments of God;" particularly those,—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself." In a word, holiness is, the having the mind that was in Christ," and the "walking as Christ walked."

18. Such has been my judgment for these three score years, without any material alteration. Only about fifty years ago I had a clearer view, than before, of justification by faith; and in this, from that very hour I never varied, no not a hair's breadth. Nevertheless, an ingenious man has publicly accused me of a thousand variations. I pray God not to lay this to his charge! I am now on the borders of the grave;

but, by the grace of God, I still witness the same confession. Indeed some have supposed, that when I began to declare, "By grace ye are saved, through faith," I retracted what I had before maintained. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." But it is an entire mistake: these scriptures, well consist with each other: the meaning of the former being plainly this: By faith we are saved from sin, and made holy. The imagination that faith *supersedes* holiness, is the marrow of Antinomianism.

19. The sum of all is this: The God of love is willing to save all the souls that he has made. This he has proclaimed to them in his word, together with the terms of salvation, revealed by the Son of his love, who gave his own life, that they that believe in him might have everlasting life. And for these he has prepared a kingdom, from the foundation of the world. But he will not force them to accept of it: he leaves them in the hands of their own counsel: he saith, "Behold, I set before you life and death; blessing and cursing; choose life that ye may live." Choose holiness, by my grace; which is the way, the only way to everlasting life. He cries aloud, be holy, and be happy; happy in this world, and happy in the world to come. "Holiness becometh his house for ever!" this is the wedding garment of all that are called to "the marriage of the Lamb." Clothed in this they will not be found naked: "They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." But as to all those who appear in the last day without the wedding garment, the Judge will say, "Cast them into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Madeley, March 26, 1790.

Sermon CXXV.—*Human Life a Dream.*

"Even like as a dream when one awaketh; so shalt thou make their image to vanish out of the city," Psa. lxxiii, 20.

1. Any one that considers the foregoing verses, will easily observe, that the psalmist is speaking directly of the wicked that prosper in their wickedness. It is very common for these, utterly to forget that they are creatures of a day: to live as if they were never to die; as if their present state was to endure for ever; or, at least, as if they were indisputably sure, that they "had much goods laid up for many years:" so that they might safely say, "soul, take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry." But how miserable a mistake is this! How often does God say to such a one, "Thou fool! this night shall thy soul be required of thee!" Well then may it be said of them, "Oh, how suddenly do they consume,"—perish, and come to a fearful end! Yea, "even like as a dream when one awaketh; so shalt thou make their image to vanish out of the city."

2. But I would at present carry this thought farther: I would consider it in a general sense, and show how near a resemblance there is between human life and a dream. An ancient poet carries the comparison farther still, when he styles life, "the dream of a shadow.' And so does Cowley, when he cries out,

"Oh life, thou nothing's younger brother;
So like, that we mistake the one for th' other."

But setting these and all other flights of poetry aside, I would seriously inquire, wherein this resemblance lies; wherein the analogy between the one and the other does properly consist?

3. In order to this, I would inquire, first, What is a dream? You will say, "Who does not know this?" Might you not rather say, who *does* know? Is there any thing more mysterious in nature? Who is there that has not experienced it; that has not dreamed a thousand times? Yet he is no more able to explain the nature of it, than he is to grasp the skies. Who can give any clear, satisfactory account of the parent of dreams, sleep? It is true, many physicians have attempted this; but they have attempted it in vain. They have talked learnedly about it; but have left the matter at last just as dark as it was before. They tell us of some of its properties and effects: but none can tell what is the essence of it.

4. However, we know the origin of dreams, and that with some degree of certainty. There can be no doubt, but some of them arise from the present constitution of the body; while others of them are probably occasioned by the passions of the mind. Again, we are clearly informed in Scripture, that some are caused by the operation of good angels; as others undoubtedly are owing to the power and malice of evil angels. (If we may dare to suppose that there are any such now, or, at least, that they have any thing to do in the world!) From the same divine treasury of knowledge we learn, that on some extraordinary occasions, the Great Father of spirits has manifested himself to human spirits, "in dreams and visions of the night." But which of all these arise from natural, which from supernatural, influence, we are many times not able to determine.

5. And how can we certainly distinguish between our dreams and our waking thoughts? What criterion is there by which we may surely know whether we are awake or asleep? It is true, as soon as we awake out of sleep, we know we have been in a dream, and are now awake. But how shall we know that a dream is such, while we continue therein? What is a dream? To give a gross and superficial, not a philosophical account of it: It is a series of persons and things presented to our mind in sleep, which have no being but in our own imagination. A dream, therefore, is a kind of digression from our real life. It seems to be an echo, of what was said or done when we were awake. Or, may we say, a dream is a fragment of life, broken off at both ends; not connected, either with the part that goes before, or with that which follows after? And is there any better way of distinguishing our dreams from our waking thoughts, than by this very circumstance? It is a kind of parenthesis, inserted in life, as that is in a discourse which goes on equally well either with it, or without it. By this then we may infallibly know a dream, by its being broken off at both ends; by its having no proper connection with the real things which either precede or follow it.

6. It is not needful to *prove* that there is a near resemblance between these transient dreams, and the dream of life. It may be of more use to *illustrate* this important truth; to place it in as striking a light as possible. Let us then seriously consider, in a few obvious particulars, the case of one that is just awaking out of life, and opening his eyes in eternity.

7. Let us then propose the case. Let us suppose we had now before us, one that was just passed into the world of spirits. Might not you address such a new born soul in some such manner as this? You have been an inhabitant of earth, forty, perhaps fifty or sixty years. But now God has uttered his voice, "Awake, thou that sleepest!" You awake; you arise; you have no more to do with these poor transient shadows. Arise, and shake thyself from the dust! See, all is *real* here! All is permanent; all eternal! Far more stable than the foundations of the earth; yea, than the pillars of that lower heaven. Now that your eyes are open, see how inexpressibly different are all the things that are now round about you! What a difference do you perceive in yourself? Where is your body? your house of clay? Where are your limbs? your hands, your feet, your head? There they lie, cold, insensible!

"No anger, hereafter, or shame
Shall redden the innocent clay;
Extinct is the animal flame,
And passion is vanished away!"

What a change is in the immortal spirit! You see every thing around you: but how? Not with eyes of flesh and blood. You hear: but not by a stream of undulating air, striking on an extended membrane. You feel: but in how wonderful a manner! You have no nerves to convey the etherial fire to the common sensory: rather are you not now all eye, all ear, all feeling, all perception? How different, now you are thoroughly awake, are all the objects round about you? Where are the houses, and gardens, and fields, and cities, which you lately saw? Where are the rivers and seas, and everlasting hills? Was it then only in a dream that our poet discovered,

"Earth hath this variety from heaven,
Of pleasure situate in hill and dale?"

Nay, I doubt all these vanished away like smoke, the moment you awoke out of the body.

8. How strange must not only the manner of existence appear, and the place wherein you are, if it may be called place; though who can define or describe the place of spirits, but the inhabitants of that unknown region? Whether they are of the number of those unhappy spirits that kept not their first estate, or of those holy ones that still "minister to the heirs of salvation?" How strange are the employments of those spirits, with which you are now surrounded! How bitter are they to the taste of those that are still dreaming upon earth! "I have no relish," said one of these, (a much applauded wit, who has lately left the body,) "for sitting upon a cloud all day long, and singing praise to God." We may easily believe him; and there is no danger of his being put to that trouble. Nevertheless, this is no trouble to them who cease not day and night, but continually sing, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth!"

9. Suppose this to be the case with any of you, that are now present before God. It may be so to morrow: perhaps to night; perhaps this night your "soul may be required of you;" the dream of life may end, and *you* may wake into broad eternity! See, there lies the poor inanimate carcass, shortly to be sown in corruption and dishonour. But, where is the immortal, incorruptible spirit? There it stands, naked before the eyes of God! Meantime, what has become of all the affairs

which you have been eagerly engaged in, under the sun? What profit have you reaped of all your labour, and care? Does your money follow you? No; you have left it behind you: the same thing to you as if it had vanished into air. Does your gay or rich apparel follow you? Your body is clothed with dust and rottenness. Your soul indeed is clothed with immortality. But, oh! What immortality? Is it an immortality of happiness and glory? or of shame and everlasting contempt? Where is the honour, the pomp of the rich and the great? The applause that surrounded you? All are gone; all are vanished away, "like as a shadow that departeth." "The play is over," said Monsieur Moultray, when he saw the ball pierce the temples of his dying master.* And what cared the courtier for this? No more than if it had been the conclusion of a farce or dance. But while the buffoon slept on and took his rest, it was not so with the monarch. Though he was not terrified with any thing on earth; he would be at the very gates of hell. Vain valour! In the very article of death, he grasped the hilt of his sword! But where was he the next moment, when the sword dropped out of his hand, and, the soul out of his body? Then ended the splendid dream of royalty; of destroying cities, and of conquering kingdoms!

10. "How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!" What are the weapons that are so terrible among *us*, to the inhabitants of eternity? How are the wise, the learned, the poet, the critic fallen, and their glory vanished away! How is the beauty fallen, the late idol of a gazing crowd! In how complete a sense are "the daughters of music brought low;" and all the instruments thereof forgotten! Are you not now convinced, that (according to the Hebrew proverb) "a living dog is better than a dead lion?" For, the *living know*, yea, *must* know, unless they obstinately refuse, "that they shall die; but the dead know not any thing," that will avail for the ease of their pain, or to lessen their misery. Also "their hope and fear, and their desire," all are perished; all of them are fled: "they have not any portion in the things that are done under the sun!"

11. Where indeed is the *hope* of those who were lately laying deep schemes, and saying, "To day, or to morrow we will go to such a city, and continue there a year, and traffic, and get gain?" How totally had they forgotten that wise admonition, "Ye know not what shall be on the morrow! For, what is your life? It is a vapour that appeareth awhile, and then vanisheth away!" Where is all your business? Where your worldly cares? Your troubles or engagements? All these things are fled away like smoke; and only your soul is left. And how is it qualified for the enjoyment of this new world? Has it a relish for the objects and enjoyments of the invisible world? Are your affections loosened from things below, and fixed on things above? Fixed on that place, where Jesus sitteth at the right hand of God? Then happy are ye: and when he whom ye love shall appear, "ye shall also appear with him in glory."

12. But how do you relish the company that surrounds you? Your old companions are gone: a great part of them probably separated from you never to return. Are your present companions angels of light? Ministering spirits, that but now whisper, "Sister spirit, come away We are sent to conduct thee over that gulf into Abraham's bosom.'

* Charles XII, king of Sweden, at the siege of Frederickshall

And what are those? Some of the souls of the righteous, whom thou didst formerly relieve with "the mammon of unrighteousness;" and who are now commissioned by your common Lord, to receive, to welcome you "into the everlasting habitations!" Then the angels of darkness will quickly discern they have no part in you. So they must either hover at a distance, or flee away in despair. Are some of these happy spirits that take acquaintance with you, the same that travelled with you below, and bore a part in your temptations? That together with you, fought the good fight of faith, and laid hold on eternal life? As you then wept together, you may rejoice together, you and your guardian angels perhaps, in order to increase your thankfulness for being "delivered from so great a death." They may give you a view of the realms below; those

"Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace
And rest can never dwell."

See on the other hand, the mansions which were "prepared for you, from the foundation of the world!" Oh what a difference between the dream that is past, and the real scene that is now present with thee! Look up! see!

"No need of the sun in that day,
Which never is follow'd by night!
Where Jesus's beauties display
A pure and a permanent light."

Look down! What a prison is there! "'Twixt upper, nether, and surrounding fire!" And what inhabitants! What horrid fearful shapes, emblems of the rage against God and man; the envy, fury, despair, fixed within, causing them to gnash their teeth at him they so long despised! Meanwhile does it comfort them to see, across the great gulf, the righteous in Abraham's bosom? What a place is that! What a "house of God, eternal in the heavens!" Earth is only his footstool: yea,

"The spacious firmament on high,
And all the blue ethereal sky."

Well then may we say to its inhabitants;

"Proclaim the glories of your Lord,
Dispersed through all the heavenly street;
Whose boundless treasures can afford,
So rich a pavement for his feet."

And yet how inconsiderable is the glory of that house, compared to that of its great Inhabitant! In view of whom all the first-born sons of light, angels, archangels, and all the company of heaven, full of light as they are full of love,

"Approach not, but with both wings veil their eyes."

13. How wonderful then, now the dream of life is over, now you are quite awake, do all these scenes appear! Even such a sight as never entered, or could enter, into your hearts to conceive! How are all those that "awake up after his likeness, now satisfied with it!" They have now a portion, real, solid, incorruptible, "that fadeth not away." Meantime, how exquisitely wretched are they, who (to wave all other considerations) have chosen for their portion those transitory shadows, which now are vanished, and have left them in an abyss of real misery, which must remain to all eternity!

14. Now, considering that every child of man who is yet upon earth, must sooner or later wake out of this dream, and enter real life; how

infinitely does it concern every one of us, to attend to this before our great change comes! Of what importance is it to be continually sensible of the condition wherein we stand! How advisable, by every possible means, to connect the ideas of time and eternity! So to associate them together, that the thought of one may never recur to your mind without the thought of the other! It is our highest wisdom to associate the ideas of the visible and invisible world; to connect temporal and spiritual, mortal and immortal being. Indeed, in our common dreams, we do not usually know we are asleep, whilst we are in the midst of our dream. As neither do we know it, while we are in the midst of the dream which we call life. But you may be conscious of it now. God grant you may, before you awake in a winding sheet of fire!

15. What an admirable idea for thus associating the ideas of time and eternity, of the visible and invisible world, is laid in the nature of religion! For what is religion? (I mean scriptural religion, for all other is the vainest of all dreams.) What is the very root of this religion? It is Immanuel, God with us! God in man! Heaven connected with earth! The unspeakable union of mortal with immortal. For "truly our fellowship (may all Christians say) is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. God hath given unto us eternal life: and this life is in his Son." What follows? "He that hath the Son hath life: and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

16. But how shall we retain a constant sense of this? I have often thought, in my waking hours, "Now, when I fall asleep, and see such and such things, I will remember, it was but a dream." Yet I could not, while the dream lasted; and probably none else can. But it is otherwise with the dream of life; which we do remember to be such even while it lasts. And if we do forget it, (as we are indeed apt to do,) a friend may remind us of it. It is much to be wished, that such a friend were always near: one that would frequently sound in our ear, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead!" Soon you will awake into real life. You will stand a naked spirit, in the world of spirits, before the face of the great God! See that you now hold fast that "eternal life, which he hath given you in his Son."

17. How admirably does this life of God branch out into the whole of religion? I mean, scriptural religion. As soon as God reveals his Son in the heart of a sinner, he is enabled to say, "The life that I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." He then "rejoices in hope of the glory of God," even with joy unspeakable. And in consequence both of this faith and hope, the love of God is shed abroad in his heart; which, filling the soul with love to all mankind, "is the fulfilling of the law."

18. And how wonderfully do both faith and love connect God with man, and time with eternity! In consideration of this, we may boldly say,—

"Vanish then this world of shadows:
Pass the former things away;
Lord appear, appear to glad us,
With the dawn of endless day!
Oh conclude this mortal story;
Throw this universe aside:
Come, eternal King of glory,
Now descend, and take thy bride!"

Sermon CXXVI.—*On Faith.*

"Now faith is the evidence of things not seen," Heb. xi, 1.

1. Many times have I thought, many times have I spoke, many times have I wrote upon these words; and yet there appears to be a depth in them, which I am in no wise able to fathom. Faith is, in one sense of the word, a divine conviction of God and of the things of God; in another, (nearly related to, yet not altogether the same,) it is a divine conviction of the invisible and eternal world. In this sense I would now consider,—

2. I am now an immortal spirit, strangely connected with a little portion of earth: but this is only for a while. In a short time I am to quit this tenement of clay, and to remove into another state,

"Which the living know not,
And the dead cannot,—or they may not tell!"

What kind of existence shall I then enter upon, when my spirit has launched out of the body? How shall I feel myself? Perceive my own being? How shall I discern the things that are round about me; either material or spiritual objects? When my eyes no longer transmit the rays of light, how will my naked spirit *see?* When the organs of hearing are mouldered into dust, in what manner shall I hear? When the brain is of no farther use, what means of thinking shall I have? When my whole body is dissolved into senseless earth, what means shall I have of gaining knowledge?

3. How strange, how incomprehensible are the means whereby I shall then take knowledge even of the material world? Will things appear then as they do now? Of the same size, shape, and colour? Or will they be altered in any, or all these respects? How will the sun, moon, and stars appear? The sublunary heavens? The planetary heavens? The region of the fixed stars? How, the fields of ether, which we may conceive to be millions of miles beyond them? Of all this we know nothing yet: and indeed we need to know nothing.

4. What then can we know of those innumerable objects, which properly belong to the invisible world? Which mortal "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into our hearts to conceive?" What a scene will then be opened, when the regions of hades are displayed without a covering! Our English translators seem to have been much at a loss for a word to render this. Indeed two hundred years ago it was tolerably expressed by the word hell, which then signified much the same with the word hades, namely, the invisible world. Accordingly, by Christ descending into hell, they meant, his body remained in the grave, his soul remained in hades, (which is the receptacle of separate spirits,) from death to the resurrection. Here we cannot doubt but the spirits of the righteous are inexpressibly happy. They are, as St. Paul expresses it, "with the Lord:" favoured with so intimate a communion with him, as "is far better" than whatever the chief of the apostles experienced while in this world. On the other hand, we learn from our Lord's own account of Dives and Lazarus, that the rich man, from the moment he left the world, entered into a state of torment. And "there is a great gulf fixed" in hades, between the place

of the holy, and that of unholy spirits, which it is impossible for either the one or the other to pass over. Indeed a gentleman of great learning, the honourable Mr. Campbell, in his account of the middle state, published not many years ago, seems to suppose, that wicked souls may amend in hades, and then remove to a happier mansion. He has great hopes, that "the rich man," mentioned by our Lord, in particular, might be purified by that penal fire, till, in process of time, he might be qualified for a better abode. But who can reconcile this with Abraham's assertion, that none can pass over the "great gulf?"

5. I cannot therefore but think, that all those who are with the rich man in the unhappy division of hades, will remain there, howling and blaspheming, cursing and looking upwards, till they are cast into "the everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." And, on the other hand, can we reasonably doubt, but that those who are now in paradise, in Abraham's bosom, all those holy souls, who have been discharged from the body, from the beginning of the world unto this day, will be continually ripening for heaven; will be perpetually holier and happier, till they are received into the "kingdom prepared for them, from the foundation of the world?"

6. But who can inform us, in what part of the universe hades is situated? This abode of both happy and unhappy spirits, till they are reunited to their bodies? It has not pleased God to reveal any thing concerning it, in the holy Scripture; and, consequently, it is not possible for us to form any judgment, or even conjecture about it. Neither are we informed, how either one or the other are employed, during the time of their abode there. Yet may we, not improbably, suppose, that the Governor of the world may sometimes permit wicked souls "to do his gloomy errands in the deep?" Or, perhaps in conjunction with evil angels, to inflict vengeance on wicked men? Or will many of them be shut up in chains of darkness, unto the judgment of the great day? In the mean time, may we not probably suppose, that the spirits of the just, though generally lodged in paradise, yet may sometimes, in conjunction with the holy angels, minister to the heirs of salvation? May they not

> "Sometimes, on errands of love,
> Revisit their brethren below?"

It is a pleasing thought, that some of these human spirits, attending us with, or in the room of, angels, are of the number of those that were dear to us, while they were in the body. So that there is no absurdity in the question;

> "Have ye your own flesh forgot,
> By a common ransom bought?
> Can death's interposing tide,
> Spirits one in Christ divide?"

But be this as it may, it is certain, human spirits swiftly increase in knowledge, in holiness, and in happiness: conversing with all the wise and holy souls that lived in all ages and nations from the beginning of the world; with angels and archangels, to whom the children of men are no more than infants; and, above all, with the eternal Son of God, "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." And let it be especially considered, whatever they learn, they will retain for ever. For they forget nothing. To forget is only incident to spirits that are clothed with flesh and blood.

7. But how will this material universe appear to a disembodied spirit? Who can tell whether any of these objects that surround us will appear the same as they do now? And if we know so little of these, what can we now know concerning objects of a quite different nature? Concerning the spiritual world? It seems it will not be possible for us to discern them at all, till we are furnished with senses of a different nature, which are not yet opened in our souls. These may enable us both to penetrate the inmost substance of things, whereof we now discern only the surface, and to discern innumerable things, of the very existence whereof we have not now the least perception. What astonishing scenes will then discover themselves to our newly opening senses! Probably fields of ether, not only ten fold, but ten thousand fold "the length of this terrene." And with what variety of furniture, animate and inanimate! How many orders of beings, not discovered by organs of flesh and blood? Perhaps, thrones, dominions, virtues, princedoms, powers?—Whether of those that have retained their first habitations and primeval strength, or of those that, rebelling against their Creator, have been cast out of heaven? And shall we not then, as far as angels ken, survey the bounds of creation, and see every place where the Almighty,

> "Stopp'd his rapid wheels, and said,—
> This be thy just circumference, oh world?"

Yea, shall we not be able to move, quick as thought, through the wide realms of uncreated night? Above all, the moment we step into eternity, shall we not feel ourselves swallowed up of him, who is in this and every place,—who filleth heaven and earth? It is only the veil of flesh and blood which now hinders us from perceiving, that the great Creator cannot but fill the whole immensity of space. He is every moment above us, beneath us, and on every side. Indeed, in this dark abode, this land of shadows, this region of sin and death, the thick cloud, which is interposed between, conceals him from our sight. But the veil will disappear, and he will appear, in unclouded majesty, "God over all, blessed for ever!"

8. How variously are the children of men employed in this world! In treading o'er "the paths they trod six thousand years before!" But who knows how we shall be employed, after we enter that invisible world? A little of it we may conceive, and that without any doubt, provided we keep to what God himself has revealed in his word, and what he works in the hearts of his children. Let us consider, first, What may be the employment of unholy spirits from death to the resurrection. We cannot doubt but the moment they leave the body, they find themselves surrounded by spirits of their own kind, probably human as well as diabolical. What power God may permit these to exercise over them we do not distinctly know. But it is not improbable, he may suffer Satan to employ them, as he does his own angels, in inflicting death, or evils of various kinds, on the men that know not God: for this end they may raise storms by sea or by land; they may shoot meteors through the air; they may occasion earthquakes; and, in numberless ways, afflict those whom they are not suffered to destroy. Where they are not permitted to take away life, they may inflict various diseases: and many of these, which we judge to be natural, are undoubtedly diabolical. I believe this is frequently the case with lunatics. It

is observable, that many of those mentioned in Scripture, who are called lunatics by one of the evangelists, are termed demoniacs by another. One of the most eminent physicians I ever knew, particularly in cases of insanity, the late Dr. Deacon, was clearly of opinion, that this was the case with many, if not with most, lunatics. And it is no valid objection to this, that these diseases are so often cured by natural means: for a wound inflicted by an evil spirit might be cured as any other, unless that spirit were permitted to repeat the blow.

9. May not some of these evil spirits be likewise employed, in conjunction with evil angels, in tempting wicked men to sin, and in procuring occasions for them? Yea, and in tempting good men to sin, even after they have escaped the corruption that is in the world? Herein doubtless they put forth all their strength; and greatly glory if they conquer. A passage in an ancient author may greatly illustrate this: (although I apprehend, he did not intend that we should take it literally:) "Satan summoned his powers, and examined what mischief each of them had done. One said, 'I have set a house on fire, and destroyed all its inhabitants.' Another said, 'I have raised a storm at sea, and sunk a ship, and all on board perished in the waters.' Satan answered, 'Perhaps those that were burned or drowned were saved.' A third said, 'I have been forty years tempting a holy man to commit adultery; and I have left him asleep in his sin.' Hearing this, Satan rose to do him honour; and all hell resounded with his praise." Hear this, all ye that imagine you cannot fall from grace!

10. Ought not we then to be perpetually on our guard against those subtle enemies? Though we see them not,—

> "A constant watch they keep:
> They eye us night and day;
> And never slumber, never sleep,
> Lest they should lose their prey."

Herein they join with "the rulers of the darkness [the intellectual darkness] of this world;" the ignorance, wickedness, and misery diffused through it, to hinder all good, and promote all evil! To this end they are continually "working with energy, in the children of disobedience." Yea, sometimes they work by them those *lying wonders* that might almost deceive even the children of God.

11. But, meantime, how may we conceive the inhabitants of the other part of hades, the souls of the righteous, to be employed? It has been positively affirmed by some philosophical men, that spirits have no place! But they do not observe, that if it were so, they must be omnipresent: an attribute which cannot be allowed to any but the Almighty Spirit. The abode of these blessed spirits the ancient Jews were used to term paradise: the same name which our Lord gave it; telling the penitent thief, "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Yet in what part of the universe this is situated who can tell, or even conjecture; since it has not pleased God to reveal any thing concerning it? But we have no reason to think they are confined to this place; or indeed to any other. May we not rather say, that, "servants of his," as well as the holy angels, they "do his pleasure;" whether among the inhabitants of earth, or in any other part of his dominions? And as we easily believe, that they are swifter than the light; even as swift as thought; they are well able to traverse the whole

universe in the twinkling of an eye, either to execute the divine commands, or to contemplate the works of God. What a field is here open before them! And how immensely may they increase in knowledge while they survey his works of creation, or providence, or his manifold wisdom in the church! What depth of wisdom, of power, and of goodness, do they discover in his methods of "bringing many sons to glory!" Especially while they converse on any of these subjects, with the illustrious dead of ancient days! With Adam, first of men; with Noah, who saw both the primeval and the ruined world; with Abraham, the friend of God; with Moses, who was favoured to speak with God, as it were, "face to face;" with Job, perfected by sufferings; with Samuel, David, Solomon, Isaiah, Daniel, and all the prophets; with the apostles, the noble army of martyrs, and all the saints who have lived and died to the present day; with our elder brethren, the holy angels, cherubim, seraphim, and all the companies of heaven; above all the name of creature owns, with Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant! Meantime, how will they advance in holiness; in the whole image of God, wherein they were created? In the love of God and man; gratitude to their Creator, and benevolence to all their fellow creatures. Yet it does not follow, (what some earnestly maintain,) that this general benevolence will at all interfere with that peculiar affection which God himself implants for our relations, friends, and benefactors. Oh no! Had you stood by his bed side, when that dying saint was crying out, "I have a father and a mother gone to heaven; (to paradise, the receptacle of happy spirits;) I have ten brothers and sisters gone to heaven; and now I am going to them, that am the eleventh! Blessed be God that I was born!" Would you have replied, "What, if you are going to them? They will be no more to you than any other persons; for you will not know them." Not know them! Nay, does not all that is in you recoil at that thought? Indeed skeptics may ask, how do disembodied spirits know each other? I answer plainly, I cannot tell. But I am certain that they do. This is as plainly proved from one passage of Scripture, as it could be from a thousand. Did not Dives and Lazarus know each other in hades, even afar off? Even though they were fixed on different sides of the "great gulf?" Can we doubt then, whether the souls that are together in paradise shall know one another? The Scripture, therefore, clearly decides this question. And so does the very reason of the thing: for we know, every holy temper which we carry with us into paradise, will remain in us for ever. But such is gratitude to our benefactors. This, therefore, will remain for ever. And this implies, that the knowledge of our benefactors will remain, without which it cannot exist.

12. And how much will that add to the happiness of those spirits, who are already discharged from the body, that they are permitted to minister to those whom they have left behind? An indisputable proof of this we have, in the twenty-second chapter of the Revelation. When the apostle fell down to worship the glorious spirit which he seems to have mistaken for Christ, he told him plainly, "I am of thy fellow servants, the prophets;" not God, not an angel, but a human spirit. And in how many ways may they "minister to the heirs of salvation?" Sometimes by counteracting wicked spirits whom we cannot resist, because we cannot see them: sometimes by preventing our being hurt

by men, or beasts, or inanimate creatures. How often may it please God to answer the prayer of good bishop Kenn:—

> "Oh may thine angels, while I sleep,
> Around my bed their vigils keep!
> Their love angelical instil,
> Stop all the consequence of ill.
> May they celestial joys rehearse,
> And thought to thought with me converse;
> Or in my stead, the whole night long,
> Sing to my God a grateful song."

And may not the Father of spirits allot this office jointly to angels, and human spirits waiting to be made perfect?

13. It may indeed be objected, that God has no need of any subordinate agents, of either angelical or human spirits, to guard his children, in their waking or sleeping hours, seeing "he that keepeth Israel doth neither slumber nor sleep." And certainly, he is able to preserve them by his own immediate power. Yea, and he is able, by his own immediate power only, without any instruments at all, to supply the wants of all his creatures, both in heaven and earth. But it is, and ever was, his pleasure, not to work by his own immediate power only, but chiefly by subordinate means, from the beginning of the world. And how wonderfully is his wisdom displayed in adjusting all these to each other! So that we may well cry out, "Oh Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all!"

14. This we know, concerning the whole frame and arrangement of the visible world. But how exceeding little do we now know concerning the invisible! And we should have known still less of it, had it not pleased the author of both worlds to give us more than natural light, to give us "his word, to be a lantern to our feet, and a light in all our paths." And holy men of old, being assisted by his Spirit, have discovered many particulars of which otherwise we should have had no conception.

15. And without Revelation, how little certainty of invisible things did the wisest of men obtain! The small glimmerings of light which they had were merely conjectural. At best, they were only a faint, dim twilight, delivered from uncertain tradition; and so obscured by heathen fables, that it was but one degree better than utter darkness.

16. How uncertain the best of these conjectures was, may easily be gathered from their own accounts. The most finished of all these accounts, is that of the great Roman poet. Where observe how warily he begins, with that apologetic preface?—*Sit mihi fas audita loqui?*—"May I be allowed to tell what I have heard?"—And in the conclusion, lest any one should imagine he believed any of these accounts, he sends the relater of them out of hades, by the *ivory gate*, through which he had just informed us, that only dreams and shadows pass. A very plain intimation, that all which has gone before, is to be looked upon as a dream!

17. How little regard they had for all these conjectures, with regard to the invisible world, clearly appears from the words of his brother poet; who affirms, without any scruple,

> "Esse aliquos manes et subterranea regna
> Nec fieri credunt."

"That there are ghosts or realms below, not even a man of them now believes."

So little could even the most improved reason discover concerning the invisible and eternal world. The greater cause have we to praise the Father of lights, who hath opened the eyes of our understanding, to discern those things which could not be seen by eyes of flesh and blood; that he who of old time shined out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, and enlightened us with the light of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ, "the author and finisher of our faith;" "by whom he made the worlds;" by whom he now sustains whatever he hath made. For,

"Till nature shall her Judge survey,
The King MESSIAH reigns."

These things we have believed upon the testimony of God, the Creator of all things, visible and invisible: by this testimony we already know the things that now exist, though not yet seen, as well as those that will exist in their season, until this visible world shall pass away, and the Son of man shall come in his glory.

18. Upon the whole, what thanks ought we to render to God, who has vouchsafed this "evidence of things unseen" to the poor inhabitants of earth, who otherwise must have remained in utter darkness concerning them? How invaluable a gift is even this imperfect light, to the benighted sons of men! What a relief is it to the defects of our senses, and, consequently, of our understanding; which can give us no information of any thing, but what is first presented by the senses. But hereby a new set of senses (so to speak) is opened in our souls: and, by this means,

'The things unknown to feeble sense,
Unseen by reason's glimmering ray,
With strong, commanding evidence,
Their heavenly origin display.
Faith lends its realizing light:
The clouds disperse, the shadows fly;
Th' Invisible appears in sight,
And God is seen by mortal eye!"

London, January 17, 1791.

SERMON CXXVII.—*The Deceitfulness of the Human Heart.*

"The heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Jer. xvii, 9.

1. THE most eminent of the ancient heathens have left us many testimonies of this. It was indeed their common opinion, that there was a time when men in general were virtuous and happy: this they termed the "golden age." And the account of this was spread through almost all nations. But it was likewise generally believed, that this happy age had expired long ago; and that men are now in the midst of the "iron age." At the commencement of this, says the poet,—

Irrupit venæ pejoris in ævum
Omne nefas: fugere pudor, verumque, fidesque;
In quorum subiere locum fraudesque, doliique,
Insidiæque, et vis, et amor sceleratus habendi.

"Immediately broke in,
With a full tide, all wickedness and sin:
Shame, truth, fidelity, swift fled away,
And cursed thirst of gold bore unresisted sway."

2. But how much more knowing than these old pagans are the present generation of Christians! How many laboured panegyrics do we now read and hear on the dignity of human nature! One eminent preacher, in one of his sermons, preached and printed a few years ago, does not scruple to affirm; first, That men in general (if not every individual) are very wise: secondly, That men in general are very virtuous: and thirdly, That they are very happy:—and I do not know, that any one yet has been so hardy as to controvert the assertion.

3. Nearly related to them, were the sentiments of an ingenious gentleman, who being asked, "My lord, what do you think of the Bible?" answered, "I think it is the finest book I ever read in my life. Only that part of it which indicates the mediatorial scheme, I do not understand: for I do not conceive there is any need of a mediator between God and man. If indeed," continued he, "I was a sinner, then I should need a mediator: but I do not conceive I am. It is true, I often act wrong, for want of more understanding; and I frequently *feel* wrong tempers, particularly proneness to anger: but I cannot allow this to be a sin; for it depends on the motion of my blood and spirits, which I cannot help. Therefore it cannot be a sin: or if it be, the blame must fall not on *me*, but on him that made me." The very sentiments of pious lord Kames, and modest Mr. Hume!

4. Some years ago a charitable woman discovered, that there was no sinner in the world, but the devil. "For," said she, "he *forces* men to act as they do; therefore they are unaccountable: the blame lights on Satan." But these more enlightened gentlemen have discovered, that there is no sinner in the world but God! For he *forces* men to think, speak, and act as they do; therefore the blame lights on God alone. Satan, avaunt! It may be doubted, whether he himself ever uttered so foul a blasphemy as this!

5. But whatever unbaptized or baptized infidels may say concerning the innocence of mankind, He that made man, and that best knows what he has made, gives a very different account of him. He informs us, that "the heart of man," of all mankind, of every man born into the world, "is desperately wicked;" and that it is "deceitful above all things:" so that we may well ask, "Who can know it?"

I. 1. To begin with this: "The heart of man is desperately wicked." In considering this, we have no need to refer to any particular sins; (these are no more than the leaves, or, at most, the fruits, which spring from that evil tree;) but rather to the general root of all. See how this was first planted in heaven itself, by "Lucifer, son of the morning;" till then undoubtedly "one of the first, if not the first archangel:" "Thou saidst, I will sit upon the side of the north." See self will; the first-born of Satan! "I will be like the Most High." See pride; the twin sister of self will. Here was the true origin of evil. Hence came the inexhaustible flood of evils upon the lower world. When Satan had once transfused his own self will and pride into the parents of mankind, together with a new species of sin,—love of the world, the loving the creature above the Creator,—all manner of wickedness, soon rushed in; all ungodliness and unrighteousness; shooting out

into crimes of every kind; soon covering the whole face of the earth with all manner of abominations. It would be an endless task, to enumerate all the enormities that broke out. Now the fountains of the great deep were broken up. The earth soon became a field of blood: revenge, cruelty, ambition, with all sorts of injustice, every species of public and private wrongs, were diffused through every part of the earth. Injustice, in ten thousand forms, hatred, envy, malice, blood-thirstiness, with every species of falsehood, rode triumphant; till the Creator, looking down from heaven, would be no more entreated for an incorrigible race; but swept them off from the face of the earth. But how little were the following generations improved by the severe judgment! They that lived after the flood do not appear to have been a whit better than those that lived before it. In a short time, probably before Noah was removed from the earth, all unrighteousness prevailed as before

2. But is there not a God in the world? Doubtless there is: and it is "he that hath made us, not we ourselves." He made us gratuitously; of his own mere mercy: for we could merit nothing of him before we had a being. It is of his mercy that he made us at all; that he hath made us sensible, rational creatures; and, above all, creatures capable of God. It is this, and this alone, which puts the essential difference between men and brutes. But if he has made us, and given us all we have; if we owe all we are and have to him; then surely he has a right to all we are and have,—to all our love and obedience. This has been acknowledged by almost all who believed themselves to be his creatures, in all ages and nations. But a few years ago a learned man frankly confessed, "I could never apprehend, that God's having created us, gave him any title to the government of us: or, that his having created us laid us under any obligation to yield him our obedience." I believe that Dr. Hutcheson was the first man that ever made any doubt of this. Or that ever doubted, much less denied, that a creature was obliged to obey his Creator. If Satan ever entertained this thought, (but it is not probable he ever did,) it would be no wonder he should rebel against God, and raise war in heaven. And hence would enmity against God arise in the hearts of men also; together with all the branches of ungodliness, which abound therein at this day. Hence would naturally arise the neglect of every duty which we owe to him as our Creator, and all the passions and hopes which are directly opposite to every such duty.

3. From the devil the spirit of independence, self will, and pride productive of all ungodliness and unrighteousness, quickly infused themselves into the hearts of our first parents in paradise. After they had eaten of the tree of knowledge, wickedness and misery of every kind rushed in with a full tide upon the earth, alienated us from God, and made way for all the rest: atheism, (now fashionably termed dissipation,) and idolatry, love of the world, seeking happiness in this or that creature, covered the whole earth.

"Upright both in heart and will,
We by our God were made:
But we turn'd from good to ill,
And o'er the creature stray'd:
Multiplied our wand'ring thought,
Which first was fixed on God alone;
In ten thousand objects sought
The bliss we lost in One."

4. It would be endless to enumerate all the species of wickedness, whether in thought, word, or action, that now overspread the earth, in every nation, and city, and family. They all centre in this,—atheism, or idolatry: pride; either thinking of themselves more highly than they ought to think, or glorying in something which they have received, as though they had not received it: independence and self will;—doing their own will, not the will of him that made them. Add to this, seeking happiness out of God; in gratifying the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, and the pride of life. Hence, it is a melancholy truth, that (unless when the Spirit of God has made the difference) all mankind now, as well as four thousand years ago, "have corrupted their ways before the Lord; and every imagination of the thought of man's heart is evil, only evil, and that continually." However, therefore, men may differ in their outward ways, (in which undoubtedly there are a thousand differences,) yet in the inward root, the enmity against God, atheism, pride, self will, and idolatry, it is true of all, that "the heart of man," of every natural man, "is desperately wicked."

5. But if this be the case, how is it that every one is not conscious of it? For who should "know the things of a man, like the spirit of a man that is in him?" Why is it that so few know themselves? For this plain reason, because the heart is not only "desperately wicked, but deceitful above all things." So deceitful, that we may well ask, "Who can know it?" Who indeed, save God that made it? By his assistance we may, in the second place, consider this, The deceitfulness of man's heart.

II. 1. "It is deceitful above all things;" that is, in the highest degree, above all that we can conceive. So deceitful, that the generality of men are continually deceiving both themselves and others. How strangely do they deceive themselves; not knowing either their own tempers or characters; imagining themselves to be abundantly better and wiser than they are. The ancient poet supposes there is no exception to this rule; that no man is willing to know his own heart.—"*At nemo in sese tentat descendere, nemo!*" None but those who are taught of God.

2. And if men thus deceive themselves, is it any wonder, that they deceive others also, and that we so seldom find "an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile!" In looking over my books some years ago, I found the following memorandum: "I am this day thirty years old; and till this day I know not that I have met with one person of that age, except in my father's house, who did not use guile more or less."

3. This is one of the sorts of desperate wickedness, which cleaves to the nature of every man, proceeding from those fruitful roots, self will, pride, and independence on God. Hence springs every species of vice and wickedness; hence every sin against God, our neighbour, and ourselves. Against God;—forgetfulness and contempt of God, of his name, his day, his word, his ordinances; atheism on the one hand, and idolatry on the other; in particular, love of the world, the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life; the love of money, the love of power, the love of ease, the love of the "honour that cometh of men," the love of the creature more than the Creator, the being lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God:—against our

neighbour;—ingratitude, revenge, hatred, envy, malice, uncharitableness.

4. Hence there is in the heart of every child of man, an inexhaustible fund of ungodliness and unrighteousness, deeply and strongly rooted in the soul, that nothing less than Almighty grace can cure it. From hence naturally arises a plentiful harvest of all evil words and works; and to complete the whole, that complex of all evils,—

> —"That foul monster, War, that we meet,
> Lays deep the noblest work of the creation;
> Which wears in vain its Maker's glorious image,
> Unprivileg'd from thee!"

In the train of this fell monster, are murder, adultery, rape, violence, and cruelty of every kind. And all these abominations are not only found in Mohammedan or Pagan countries, where their horrid practice may seem to be the natural result of equally horrid principles; but in those that are called Christian countries, yea, in the most knowing and civilized states and kingdoms. And let it not be said, this is only the case in Roman Catholic countries. Nay, we that are called reformed, are not one whit behind them in all manner of wickedness. Indeed no crime ever prevailed among the Turks or Tartars, which we here cannot parallel in every part of Christendom. Nay, no sin ever appeared in heathen or papal Rome, which is not found, at this day, in Germany, France, Holland, England, and every other Protestant as well as popish country. So that it might now be said, with as much truth, and as few exceptions, of every court in Europe, as it was formerly in the court of Saul; "There is none righteous, no, not one: they are altogether become abominable: there is none that understandeth, and seeketh after God."

5. But, is there no exception as to the wickedness of man's heart? Yes, in those that are born of God. "He that is born of God, keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." God has "purified his heart by faith," so that his wickedness is departed from him. "Old things are passed away, and all things [in him] are become new." So that his heart is no longer desperately wicked, but "renewed in righteousness and true holiness." Only let it be remembered, that the heart, even of a believer, is not wholly purified when he is justified. Sin is then overcome, but it is not rooted out; it is conquered, but not destroyed. Experience shows him, first, That the root of sin, self will, pride, and idolatry, remain still in his heart. But as long as he continues to watch and pray, none of them can prevail against him. Experience teaches him, secondly, That sin (generally pride or self will,) cleaves to his best actions. So that even with regard to these, he finds an absolute necessity for the blood of atonement.

6. But how artfully does this conceal itself, not only from others, but even from ourselves. Who can discover it in all the disguises it assumes, or trace it through all its latent mazes? And if it be so difficult to know the heart of a good man, who can know the heart of a wicked one, which is far more deceitful? No unregenerate man, however sensible, ever so experienced, ever so wise in his generation. And yet these are they who pique themselves upon "knowing the world;" and imagine, they see through all men. Vain men! One may boldly say they "know nothing yet as they ought to know." Even that politician

in the late reign neither knew the heart of himself or of other men, whose favourite saying was, "Do not tell me of your virtue, or religion: I tell you, every man has his price;" yes, sir R—, every man like you; every one that sells himself to the devil.

7. Did that right honourable wretch, compared to whom sir R—— was a saint, know the heart of man? He that so earnestly advised his own son, "never to speak the truth? To lie or dissemble as often as he speaks? To wear a mask continually?" That earnestly counselled him, "not to debauch *single women*, (because some inconveniences might follow,) but always married women." Would one imagine this groveling animal ever had a wife or a married daughter of his own? Oh rare Lord C——! Did ever man so well deserve, though he was a peer of the realm, to die by the side of Newgate? Or did ever book so well deserve to be burned by the common hangman, as his letters! Did Mr. David Hume, lower, if possible, than either of the former, know the heart of man? No more than a worm or a beetle does. After "playing so idly with the darts of death," do you now find it a laughing matter? What think you now of Charon? Has he ferried you over Styx? At length he has taught you to know a little of your own heart! At length you know it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!

8. One of the ablest champions of infidelity, (perhaps the most elegant and the most decent writer, that ever produced a system of religion, without being in the least obliged to the Bible for it,) breaks out in the fulness of his heart; "Who would not wish that there was full proof of the Christian Revelation; since it is undoubtedly the most benevolent system that ever appeared in the world!" Might he not add a reason of another kind; because without this, man must be altogether a mystery to himself. Even with the help of Revelation, he knows exceedingly little: but without it, he would know abundantly less; and nothing with any certainty. Without the light which is given us by the oracles of God, how could we reconcile his greatness with his meanness? While we acknowledged with sir John Davis,—

> "I know my soul has power to know all things;
> Yet is she blind, and ignorant of all:
> I know I'm one of nature's little kings,
> Yet to the least and vilest things in thrall."

9. Who then knoweth the hearts of all men? Surely none but he that made them. Who knoweth his own heart? Who can tell the depth of its enmity against God? Who knoweth how deeply it is sunk into the nature of Satan?

III. 1. From the preceding considerations, may we not learn, first, "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool?" For who that is wise would trust one whom he knows to be "desperately wicked?" Especially, whom he hath known, by a thousand experiments, to be "deceitful above all things?" What can we expect, if we still trust a known liar and deceiver, but to be deceived and cheated to the end?

2. We may, hence, in the second place, infer the truth of that other reflection of Solomon: "Seest thou a man that is wise in his own eyes; there is more hope of a fool than of him." For at what distance from wisdom must that man be, who never suspected his want of it? And will not his thinking so well of himself, prevent his receiving

instruction from others? Will he not be apt to be displeased at admonition, and to construe reproof into reproach? Will he not therefore be less ready to receive instruction, than even one that has little natural understanding? Surely no fool is so incapable of amendment, as one that imagines himself to be wise. He that supposes himself not to need a physician, will hardly profit by his advice.

3. May we not learn hence, thirdly, the wisdom of that caution: "Let him who thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall:" Or, (to render the text more properly,) "Let him that assuredly standeth, take heed lest he fall." How firmly soever he may stand, he has still a deceitful heart. In how many instances has he been deceived already. And so he may again. Suppose he be not deceived now, does it follow that he never will? Does he not stand upon slippery ground? And is he not surrounded with snares into which he may fall and rise no more?

4. Is it not wisdom for him that is now standing, continually to cry to God, "Search me, oh Lord, and prove me; try out my reins and my heart? Look well, if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Thou alone, oh God, "knowest the hearts of all the children of men:" Oh show thou me what spirit I am of, and let me not deceive my own soul! Let me not "think of myself more highly than I ought to think." But let me always "think soberly, according as thou hast given me the measure of faith!"

Halifax, April 21, 1790.

SERMON CXXVIII.—*The heavenly treasure in earthen vessels*

"We have this treasure in earthen vessels," 2 Cor. iv, 7.

1. How long was man a mere riddle to himself! For how many ages were the wisest of men utterly unable to reveal the mystery, to reconcile the strange inconsistencies in him; the wonderful mixture of good and evil, of greatness and littleness, of nobleness and baseness! The more deeply they considered these things, the more they were entangled. The more pains they took, in order to clear up the subject, the more they were bewildered in vain, uncertain conjectures.

2. But what all the wisdom of man was unable to do, was in due time done by the wisdom of God. When it pleased God to give an account of the origin of things, and of man in particular, all the darkness vanished away, and the clear light shone. "God said, Let us make man in our own image." It was done. In the image of God man was made. Hence we are enabled to give a clear, satisfactory account of the greatness, the excellency, the dignity of man. But "man, being in honour," did not continue therein; but rebelled against his sovereign Lord. Hereby he totally lost not only the favour, but likewise the image of God. And "in Adam all died:" for fallen "Adam begat a son in his own likeness." And hence we are taught to give a clear, intelligible account of the littleness and baseness of man. He is sunk even below the beasts that perish. Human nature now is not only sensual, but devilish. There is in every man born into the world, (what is not in any part of the brute creation; no beast is fallen so low,) a "carnal mind, which is enmity," direct enmity, "against God."

3. By considering therefore these things in one view, the creation and the fall of man, all the inconsistencies of his nature are easily and fully understood. The greatness and littleness, the dignity and baseness, the happiness and misery, of his present state, are no longer a mystery, but clear consequences of his original state, and his rebellion against God. This is the key that opens the whole mystery; that removes all the difficulty, by showing what God made man at first, and what man has made himself. It is true, he may regain a considerable measure of "the image of God wherein he was created:" but still, whatever we regain, we shall "have this treasure in earthen vessels."

In order to have a clear conception of this, we may inquire, first, What is "the treasure" which we now have: and, in the second place, consider, how "we have this treasure in earthen vessels."

I. 1. And first, let us inquire, What is this treasure which Christian believers have? I say believers, for it is of these directly, that the apostle is here speaking. Part of this they have in common with other men, in the remains of the image of God. May we not include herein, first, an immaterial principle, a spiritual nature, endued with understanding, and affections, and a degree of liberty; of a self-moving, yea, and self-governing power? Otherwise we were mere machines; stocks, and stones: and, secondly, all that is vulgarly called natural conscience? Implying some discernment of the difference between moral good and evil, with an approbation of the one, and disapprobation of the other, by an inward monitor, excusing or accusing? Certainly, whether this is natural, or superadded by the grace of God, it is found, at least in some small degree, in every child of man. Something of this is found in every human heart; passing sentence concerning good and evil; not only in all Christians, but in all Mohammedans, all Pagans, yea, the vilest of savages.

2. May we not believe, that all Christians, though but nominally such, have sometimes at least some desire to please God? As well as some light concerning what does really please him, and some convictions, when they are sensible of displeasing him? Such treasure have all the children of men, more or less, even when they do not yet know God.

3. But it is not these of whom the apostle is here speaking; neither is this the treasure which is the subject of his discourse. The persons concerning whom he is here speaking, are those that are born of God; those that, "being justified by faith," have now redemption in the blood of Jesus, even the forgiveness of sins; those who enjoy that peace of God which passeth all understanding; whose soul doth magnify the Lord, and rejoice in him with joy unspeakable; and who feel the "love of God shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto them." This then is the treasure which they have received; a faith of the operation of God; a peace which sets them above the fear of death, and enables them in everything to be content; a hope full of immortality, whereby they already "taste the powers of the world to come;" the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, with love to every child of man, and a renewal in the whole image of God, in all righteousness and true holiness. This is properly and directly the treasure, concerning which the apostle is here speaking.

II. 1. But this, invaluable as it is, "we have in earthen vessels." The word is exquisitely proper, denoting both the brittleness of the

vessels, and the meanness of the matter they are made of. It directly means, what we term earthenware; china, porcelain, and the like. How weak, how easily broken in pieces! Just such is the case with a holy Christian. We have the heavenly treasure in earthly, mortal, corruptible bodies. "Dust thou art," saith the righteous Judge to his rebellious creature, till then incorruptible and immortal, "and to dust thou shalt return." How finely (but with what a mixture of light and darkness) does the heathen poet touch upon this change! *Post ignem ætherea domo subduxerat.* "After man had stolen fire from heaven." (What an emblem of forbidden knowledge!) *Magna et nova febrium*, &c, that unknown army of consumptions, fevers, sickness, pain of every kind, fixed their camp upon earth, which till then they could no more have entered, than they could have scaled heaven; and all tended to introduce and pave the way for the last enemy death. From the moment that awful sentence was pronounced, the body received the sentence of death in itself; if not from the moment our first parents completed their rebellion, by eating of the forbidden fruit. May we not probably conjecture that there was some quality naturally in this, which sowed the seeds of death in the human body, till then incorruptible and immortal? Be this as it may, it is certain that, from this time, "the incorruptible body has pressed down the soul." And no marvel, seeing the soul, during its vital union with the body, cannot exert any of its operations, any otherwise than in union with the body, with its bodily organs. But all of these are more debased and depraved by the fall of man, than we can possibly conceive; and the brain, on which the soul more directly depends, not less than the rest of the body. Consequently, if these instruments, by which the soul works, are disordered, the soul itself must be hindered in its operation. Let a musician be ever so skilful, he will make but poor music if his instrument be out of tune. From a disordered brain, (such as is, more or less, that of every child of man,) there will necessarily arise confusedness of apprehension, showing itself in a thousand instances; false judgment, the natural result thereof; and wrong inferences: and from these, innumerable mistakes will follow, in spite of all the caution we can use. But mistakes in the judgment will frequently give occasion to mistakes in practice: they will naturally cause our speaking wrong in some instances, and acting wrong in others: nay, they may occasion not only wrong words or actions, but wrong tempers also. If I judge a man to be better than he really is; in consequence, I really love him more than he deserves. If I judge another to be worse than he really is; I shall, in consequence, love him less than he deserves. Now both these are wrong tempers. Yet possibly it may not be in my power to avoid either the one or the other.

2. Such are the unavoidable consequences of having these "treasures in earthen vessels." Not only death, and its forerunners, sickness, weakness, and pain, and a thousand infirmities, but likewise error, in ten thousand shapes, will be always ready to attack us. Such is the present condition of humanity! Such is the state of the wisest men! Lord, "what is man that thou art still mindful of him; or the son of man, that thou regardest him?"

3. Something of this great truth, that the "corruptible body presses down the soul," is strongly expressed in those celebrated lines of the ancient poet: speaking of the souls of men, he says,—

Igneus est ollis vigor et celestis origo
Seminibus, quantum non noxia corpora tardant,
Terrenique hebetant artus moribundaque membra.

"These seeds of heavenly fire,
With strength innate, would to their source aspire;
But that their earthly limbs obstruct their flight,
And check their soaring to the plains of light."

4. But suppose it pleased the all-wise Creator, for the sin of man, to suffer the souls of men in general, to be weighed down in this miserable manner by their corruptible body; why does he permit the excellent treasure which he has entrusted to his own children, to be still lodged in these poor earthen vessels? Would not this question naturally occur to any reflecting mind? Perhaps it would; and therefore the apostle immediately furnishes us with a full answer: God has done this, that "the excellency of the power might be of God, and not of us:" that it might be undeniably plain, to whom that excellent power belonged: that no flesh might glory in his sight; but that all who have received this treasure, might continually cry; "Not unto us, but unto thee, oh Lord, be the praise, for thy name, and for thy truth's sake."

5. Undoubtedly this was the main design of God, in this wonderful dispensation; to humble man, to make and keep him little, and poor, and base, and vile, in his own eyes. And whatever we suffer hereby, we are well repaid, if it be a means of "hiding pride from man;" of laying us low in the dust, even then, when we are most in danger of being lifted up by the excellent gifts of God.

6. Nay, if we suffer hereby, from the mean habitation of the immortal spirit; if pain, sickness, and numberless other afflictions besides, to which we should not otherwise have been liable, assault us on every side, and at length bear us down into the dust of death; what are we losers by this? Losers! No; "In all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us." Come on then, disease, weakness, pain; afflictions, in the language of men. Shall we not be infinite gainers by them? Gainers for ever and ever! Seeing "these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!"

7. And are we not, by the consciousness of our present weakness, effectually taught wherein our strength lies? How loud does it proclaim, "Trust in the Lord JEHOVAH; for in him is everlasting strength!" Trust in him who suffered a thousand times more than ever you can suffer! Hath he not all power in heaven and in earth? Then, what though

"The heavenly treasure now we have
In a vile house of clay!
Yet He shall to the utmost save,
And keep it to that day."

Potta, June 17, 1790.

SERMON CXXIX.—*On Living without God.*

"Without God in the world," Eph. ii, 12.

1. PERHAPS these words might be more properly translated *atheists in the world.* This seems to be a little stronger expression than, "without God in the world;" which sounds nearly negative, and does not necessarily imply any more than, the having no fellowship or intercourse with God. On the contrary, the word atheist is commonly understood to mean something positive; the not only disclaiming any intercourse with him, but denying his very being.

2. The case of these unhappy men may be much illustrated by a late incident; the truth of which cannot reasonably be doubted; there having been so large a number of eye witnesses. An ancient oak being cut down, and split through the midst; out of the very heart of the tree crept a large toad, and walked away, with all the speed he could. Now how long, may we probably imagine, had this creature continued there? It is not unlikely it might have remained in its nest above a hundred years. It is not improbable, it was nearly, if not altogether, coeval with the oak; having been some way or other inclosed therein, at the time that it was planted. It is not, therefore, unreasonable to suppose, that it had lived that strange kind of life at least a century. We say, *it had lived!* But what manner of life? How desirable! How enviable! As Cowley says,

> "Oh life, most precious and most dear!
> Oh life, that Epicures would long to share!"

Let us spend a few thoughts upon so uncommon a case, and make some improvement of it.

3. This poor animal had organs of sense; yet it had not any sensation. It had eyes; yet no ray of light ever entered its black abode. From the very first instant of its existence there, it was shut up in impenetrable darkness. It was shut up from the sun, moon, and stars, and from the beautiful face of nature: indeed from the whole visible world, as much as if it had no being.

4. As no air could penetrate its sable recess, it consequently could have no *hearing*. Whatever organs it was provided with, they could be of no use; seeing no undulating air could find a way through the walls that surrounded it. And there is no reason to believe, that it had any sense analogous to those either of *smelling* or *tasting*. In a creature which did not need any food, the second would have been of no possible use Neither was there any way whereby the objects of smell or taste could make their approach to it. It must be very little, if at all, that it could be acquainted even with the general sense, that of *feeling;* as it always continued in one unvaried posture amidst the parts that surrounded it; all of these being immovably fixed, could make no new impression upon it: so that it had only one feeling from hour to hour, and from day to day, during its whole duration.

5. And as this poor animal was destitute of *sensation*, it must have equally been destitute of *reflection.* Its head (of whatever sort it was) having no materials to work upon, no ideas of sensation of any kind, could not produce any degree of reflection. It scarce, therefore, could

have any *memory* or any *imagination*. Nor could it have any locative *power*, while it was so closely bound in on every side. If it had in itself some springs of motion; yet it was impossible that power should be exerted, because the narrowness of its cavern could not allow of any change of place.

6. How exact a parallel may be drawn between this creature, (hardly to be called an animal,) and a man that is "without God in the world!" Such as are a vast majority of even those that are called Christians. I do not mean that they are atheists, in the common sense of the word I do not believe that these are so numerous as many have imagined. Making all the inquiry and observation I could, for upwards of fifty years, I could not find twenty who seriously disbelieved the being of a God: nay, I have found only two of these (to the best of my judgment) in the British islands: both of these then lived in London, and had been of this persuasion many years. But several years before they were called to appear before God, both John S— and John B— were fully convinced that there is a God; and, what is more remarkable, they were first convinced that he is a terrible, and then that he is a merciful, God. I mention these two accounts, to show, not only that there are real literal atheists in the world, but also, that even then, if they will condescend to ask it, they may find "grace to help in time of need."

7. But I do not mean such as these, when I speak of those who are atheists, or "without God in the world;" but of such as are only practical atheists; as have not God in all their thoughts: such as have not acquainted themselves with him, neither have any fellowship with him; such as have no more intercourse with God, or the invisible world, than this animal had with the visible. I will endeavour to draw the parallel between these. And may God apply it to their hearts!

8. Every one of these is in exactly such a situation with regard to the invisible, as the toad was in respect to the visible world. That creature had, undoubtedly, a sort of life, such as it was. It certainly had all the internal and external parts, that are essential to animal life; and, without question, it had suitable juices, which kept up a kind of circulation. This was a life indeed! and exactly such a life is that of the atheist; the man "without God in the world." What a thick veil is between him and the invisible world, which, with regard to him, is as though he had no being. He has not the least perception of it; not the most distant idea. He has not the least sight of God, the intellectual sun; nor any the least attraction towards him, or desire to have any knowledge of his ways. Although His light be gone forth into all lands, and his sound into the end of the world, yet he *heareth* no more thereof, than of the fabled music of the spheres. He *tastes* nothing of the goodness of God, or the powers of the world to come. He does not *feel* (as our church speaks) the working of the Holy Spirit in his heart. In a word, he has no more intercourse with, or knowledge of, the spiritual world, than this poor creature had of the natural, while shut up in its dark inclosure.

9. But the moment the Spirit of the Almighty strikes the heart of him that was till then without God in the world, it breaks the hardness of his heart, and creates all things new. The Sun of righteousness appears, and shines upon his soul; showing him the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. He is in a new world. All things

around him are become new. Such as it never before entered into his heart to conceive. He sees, so far as his newly opened eyes can bear the sight,

"The opening heavens around him shine,
With beams of sacred bliss."

He sees that he has "an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;" and that he has "redemption in his blood, the remission of sins." He sees a "new way that is opened into the holiest by the blood of Jesus;" and his light "shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

10. By the same gracious stroke, he that before had ears, but heard not, is now made capable of *hearing*. He hears the voice that raiseth the dead; the voice of him that is the "resurrection and the life." He is no longer deaf to his invitations or commands, to his promises or threatenings; but gladly hears every word that proceeds out of his mouth; and governs thereby, all his thoughts, words, and actions.

11. At the same time he receives other spiritual senses, capable of discerning spiritual good and evil. He is enabled to *taste*, as well as to see, how gracious the Lord is. He enters into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, and tastes of the powers of the world to come. He finds Jesus's love far better than wine; yea, sweeter than honey or the honey comb. He knows what that meaneth: "All thy garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia." He *feels* the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto him; or, as our church expresses it, "feels the working of the Spirit of God in his heart." Meantime it may easily be observed, that the substance of all these figurative expressions is comprised in that one word FAITH, taken in its widest sense; being enjoyed more or less, by every one that believes in the name of the Son of God. This change, from spiritual death to spiritual life, is properly the new birth: all the particulars whereof are admirably well expressed by Dr. Watts, in one verse:

"Renew my eyes, open my ears,
And form my soul afresh;
Give me new passions, joys, and fears,
And turn the stone to flesh."

12. But before this universal change, there may be many partial changes in a natural man, which are frequently mistaken for it; whereby many say, Peace, peace, to their souls, when there is no peace. There may be not only a considerable change in the life, so as to refrain from open sin, yea, the easily besetting sin; but also a considerable change of tempers: conviction of sin, strong desires, and good resolutions. And here we have need to take great care, not on the one hand to despise the day of small things; nor, on the other, to mistake any of these partial changes, for that entire, general change, the new birth: that total change, from the image of the earthly Adam, into the image of the heavenly; from an earthly, sensual, devilish mind, into the mind that was in Christ.

13. Settle it therefore in your hearts, that however you may be changed in many other respects, yet in Christ Jesus, that is, according to the Christian institution, nothing will avail without the whole mind that was in Christ, enabling you to walk as Christ walked. Nothing is more sure than this: "If any man be in Christ," a true believer in

him, "he is a new creature: old things [in him] are passed away; all things are become new."

14. From hence we may clearly perceive, the wide difference there is between Christianity and morality. Indeed nothing can be more sure, than that true Christianity cannot exist without both the inward experience and outward practice of justice, mercy, and truth; and this alone is given in morality. But it is equally certain, that all morality, all the justice, mercy, and truth, which can possibly exist without Christianity, profiteth nothing at all; is of no value, in the sight of God, to those that are under the Christian dispensation. Let it be observed, I purposely add, to those that are under the Christian dispensation; because I have no authority from the word of God, "to judge those that are without;" nor do I conceive that any man living has a right to sentence all the heathen and Mohammedan world to damnation. It is far better to leave them to him that made them, and who is "the Father of the spirits of all flesh;" who is the God of the heathens as well as the Christians, and who hateth nothing that he hath made. But, meantime, this is nothing to those that name the name of Christ: all those being under the law, the Christian law, shall, undoubtedly, be judged thereby. And, of consequence, unless these be so changed as was the animal above mentioned, unless they have new senses, ideas, passions, tempers, they are no Christians. However just, true, or merciful, they may be, they are but atheists still!

15. Perhaps there may be some well meaning persons who carry this farther still; who aver, whatever change is wrought in men, whether in their hearts or lives, yet if they have not clear views of those capital doctrines, the fall of man, justification by faith, and of the atonement made by the death of Christ, and of his righteousness transferred to them, they can have no benefit from his death. I dare in no wise affirm this. Indeed I do not believe it. I believe the merciful God regards the lives and tempers of men more than their ideas. I believe he respects the goodness of the heart, rather than the clearness of the head; and that if the heart of a man be filled (by the grace of God, and the power of his Spirit,) with the humble, gentle, patient love of God and man, God will not cast him into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels, because his ideas are not clear, or because his conceptions are confused. "Without holiness," I own, "no man shall see the Lord;" but I dare not add, Or clear ideas.

16. But to return to the text. Let me entreat all of you who are still "without God in the world," to consider, that with all your humanity, benevolence, and virtue, you are still

Inclusi tenebris, et carcere cæco:

"Inclosed in darkness and infernal shade."

My dear friends! you do not see God. You do not see the Sun of righteousness. You have no fellowship with the Father, or with his Son Jesus Christ. You never heard the voice that raiseth the dead. Ye know not the voice of your Shepherd. Ye have not received the Holy Ghost. Ye have no spiritual senses. You have your old, natural ideas, passions, joys, and fears: you are not new creatures. Oh cry to God, that he may rend the veil which is still upon your hearts! And which gives you occasion to complain;

"Oh dark, dark, dark, I still must say,
Amidst the blaze of gospel day!"

Oh that you may this day hear his voice, who speaketh as never man spake, saying, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee!" Is it not *his* voice that crieth aloud, "Look unto me, and be thou saved!" He saith, "Lo, I come!" "Even so, Lord Jesus; come quickly!"

Rotherham, July 6, 1790.

Sermon CXXX.—*On the Danger of Increasing Riches*

"If riches increase, set not your heart upon them," Psa. lxii, 10.

1. From that express declaration of our Lord,—"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven,"—we may easily learn, that none can *have* riches, without being greatly endangered by them. But if the danger of barely having them is so great, how much greater is the danger of *increasing* them? This danger is great even to those who receive what is transmitted to them by their forefathers; but it is abundantly greater to those who acquire them by their skill and industry. Therefore nothing can be more prudent than this caution: "If riches increase, set not thine heart upon them."

2. It is true, riches, and the increase of them, are the gift of God. Yet great care is to be taken, that what is intended for a blessing, do not turn into a curse. To prevent which, it is highly expedient to consider seriously,

I. What is meant by riches; and when they may be said to increase.

II. What is implied in setting our hearts upon them; and how we may avoid it.

1. Consider, first, What is here meant by riches. Indeed some may imagine, that it is hardly possible to mistake the meaning of this common word. Yet in truth, there are thousands in this mistake; and many of them quite innocently. A person of note hearing a sermon preached upon this subject several years since, between surprise and indignation, broke out aloud, "Why does he talk about riches here? There is no rich man at Whitehaven, but sir James L——r." And it is true, there was none but he that had forty thousand pounds a year, and some millions in ready money. But a man may be rich that has not a hundred a year, nor even one thousand pounds in cash. Whosoever has food to eat, and raiment to put on, with something over, is rich. Whoever has the necessaries and conveniences of life for himself and his family, and a little to spare for them that have not, is properly a rich man; unless he is a miser, a lover of money, one that hoards up what he can and ought to give to the poor. For if so, he is a poor man still, though he has millions in the bank; yea, he is the poorest of men; for,

"The beggars but a common lot deplore:
The rich poor man's emphatically poor."

2. But here an exception may be made. A person may have more than necessaries and conveniences for his family, and yet not be rich

For he may be in debt; and his debts may amount to more than he is worth. But if this be the case, he is not a rich man, how much money soever he has in his hands. Yea, a man of business may be afraid, that this is the real condition of his affairs, whether it be or no; and then he cannot be so charitable as he otherwise would, for fear of being unjust. How many that are engaged in trade, are in this very condition! Those especially that trade to a very large amount: for their affairs are frequently so entangled, that it is not possible to determine, with any exactness, how much they are worth; or indeed whether they are worth any thing or nothing. Should we not make a fair allowance for them?

3. And beware of forming a hasty judgment concerning the fortune of others. There may be secrets in the situation of a person, which few but God are acquainted with. Some years since, I told a gentleman, "Sir, I am afraid you are covetous." He asked me, What is the reason of your fear? I answered, "A year ago, when I made a collection for the expense of repairing the foundery, you subscribed five guineas. At the subscription made this year you subscribed only half a guinea." He made no reply: but after a time asked, "Pray, sir, answer me a question. Why do you live upon potatoes?" (I did so between three and four years.) I replied, "It has much conduced to my health." He answered, "I believe it has. But did you not do it likewise to save money?" I said, "I did; for what I save from my own meat, will feed another that else would have none." "But, sir," said he, "if this be your motive, you may save much more. I know a man that goes to the market at the beginning of every week: there he buys a pennyworth of parsnips, which he boils in a large quantity of water. The parsnips serve him for food, and the water for drink, the ensuing week. So his meat and drink together cost him only a penny a week." This he constantly did, though he had then two hundred pounds a year, to pay the debts which he had contracted before he knew God! And this was he whom I had set down for a covetous man!

4. But there are those who are conscious before God that they are rich. And, doubtless, some among *you* are of the number. You have more of the goods of this world than is needful either for yourself or your family. Let each consider for himself. Do *your* riches increase? Do not you understand that plain expression? Have you not more money, or more of money's worth, than you had ten or twenty years ago? Or at this time last year? If you keep any account, you can easily know this. Indeed you ought to know; otherwise you are not a good steward, even in this respect, of the mammon of unrighteousness. And every man, whether engaged in trade or not, ought to know, whether his substance lessens or increases.

5. But many have found out a way never to be rich, though their substance increase ever so much. It is this: as fast as ever money comes in, they lay it out either in land, or enlarging their business. By this means, each of these, keeping himself bare of money, can still say, "I am not rich." Yea, though he has ten, twenty, a hundred times more substance, than he had some years ago. This may be explained by a recent case. A gentleman came to a merchant in London, a few years since, and told him, "Sir, I beg you will give me a guinea, for a worthy family in great distress." He replied, "Really, Mr. M. I cannot

well afford to give it you just now. But if you will call upon me when I am worth ten thousand pounds, upon such an occasion I will give you ten guineas." Mr. M., after some time, called upon him again, and said, "Sir, I claim your promise; now you are worth ten thousand pounds." He replied, "That is very true. But I assure you, I cannot spare one guinea so well as I could then."

6. It is possible, for a man to cheat himself by this ingenious device. And he may cheat other men: for as long "as thou doest good unto thyself, men will speak well of thee." "A right *good man*," says the Londoner: "he is worth a plumb:" (a hundred thousand pounds.) But, alas! he cannot deceive the devil. Ah no! The curse of God is upon thee already, and all that thou hast. And to morrow, when the devil seizes thy soul, will he not say, "What do all thy riches profit thee?" Will they purchase a pillow for thy head, in the lake of fire burning with brimstone? Or will they procure thee a cup of "water to cool thy tongue, while thou art tormented in that flame?" Oh follow the wise direction here given; that God may not say unto thee, "Thou fool!"

7. This shift, therefore, will not avail. It will not be any protection, either against the wrath of God, or the malice and power of the devil. Thou art convicted already of "setting thy heart" upon thy riches, if thou layest out all that thou hast above the conveniences of life, on adding money to money, house to house, or field to field, without giving at least a tenth of thine income (the Jewish proportion) to the poor. By whatsoever means thy riches increase, whether with or without labour; whether by trade, legacies, or any other way; unless thy charities increase in the same proportion; unless thou givest a full tenth of thy substance, of thy fixed and occasional income; thou dost undoubtedly set thy heart upon thy gold, and it will "eat thy flesh as fire!"

8. But, oh who can convince a rich man that he sets his heart upon riches? For considerably above half a century I have spoken on this head, with all the plainness that was in my power. But with how little effect! I doubt whether I have in all that time convinced fifty misers of covetousness. When the lover of money was described ever so clearly, and painted in the strongest colours, who applied it to himself? To whom did God, and all that knew him, say, "Thou art the man!" If he speaks to any of you that are present, oh do not stop your ears! Rather say with Zaccheus, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor: and if I have done any wrong to any man, I restore him fourfold!" He did not mean that he had done this in time past; but that he determined to do so for the time to come. I charge thee before God, thou lover of money, to "go and do likewise!"

9. I have a message from God unto thee, oh rich man, whether thou wilt hear, or whether thou wilt forbear! Riches have increased with thee; at the peril of thy soul, "set not thine heart upon them!" Be thankful to him that gave thee such a talent, so much power of doing good. Yet dare not rejoice over them, but with fear and trembling. *Cave ne inhæreas*, says pious Kempis, *ne capiaris et pereas*. "Beware thou cleave not unto them, lest thou be entangled and perish." Do not make them thy end; thy chief delight; thy happiness; thy God! See that thou expect not happiness in money, nor any thing that is purchasable thereby; in gratifying either the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, or the pride of life.

10. But let us descend to particulars: and see that each of you deal faithfully with his own soul. If any of you have now twice, thrice, or four times, as much substance as when you first saw my face, faithfully examine yourselves, and see if you do not set your hearts, if not directly on money or riches themselves, yet on some of the things that are purchasable thereby; which comes to the same thing. All those the apostle John includes under that general name, *the world;* and the desire of them, or to seek happiness in them, under that form, "the love of the world." This he divides into three branches: "The desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life." Fairly examine yourselves with regard to these. And first, as to "the desire of the flesh." I believe this means the seeking of happiness in the things that gratify the senses. To instance in one: do not you seek your happiness in enlarging the pleasure of *tasting?* To be more particular: do you not *eat* more plentifully, or more delicately, than you did ten or twenty years ago? Do not you use more *drink*, or drink of a more *costly* kind, than you did then? Do you sleep on as hard a bed as you did once; suppose your health will bear it? To touch on one point more: do you *fast* as often, now you are rich, as you did when you was poor? Ought you not in all reason to do this rather more often than more seldom? I am afraid your own heart condemns you. You are not clear in this matter.

11. The second branch of the love of the world, "the desire of the eyes," is of a wider extent. We may understand thereby, the seeking our happiness in gratifying the imagination, (which is chiefly done by means of the eyes,) by grand, or new, or beautiful objects. If they may not all be reduced to one head: since neither grand nor beautiful objects are pleasing, when the novelty of them is gone. But are not the veriest trifles pleasing as long as they are new? Do not some of you, on the score of novelty, seek no small part of your happiness in that trifle of trifles, dress? Do not you bestow more money, or (which is the same) more time or pains upon it, than you did once? I doubt this is not done to please God. Then it pleases the devil. If you laid aside your needless ornaments some years since, ruffles, necklaces, spider caps, ugly, unbecoming bonnets, costly linen, expensive laces, have you not, in defiance of religion and reason, taken to them again?

12. Perhaps you say, "you can now *afford* the expense." This is the quintessence of nonsense. Who gave you this addition to your fortune? Or (to speak properly) *lent* it to you? To speak more properly still, who lodged it for a time in your hands as his stewards? Informing you at the same time, for what purposes he entrusted you with it? And can you *afford* to waste your Lord's goods; for every part of which you are to give an account? Or, to expend them in any other way than that which he hath expressly appointed? Away with this vile, diabolical cant! Let it never more come out of your lips. This *affording* to rob God, is the very cant of hell. Do not you know, that God entrusted you with that money, (all above what buys necessaries for your families,) to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to help the stranger, the widow, the fatherless; and indeed, as far as it will go, to relieve the wants of all mankind? How can you, how dare you, defraud your Lord, by applying it to any other purpose? When he entrusted you with a little, did he not entrust you with it that you might lay out all that little in

doing good? And when he entrusted you with more, did he not entrust you with that additional money that you might do so much the more good, as you had more ability? Had you any more right to waste a pound, a shilling, or a penny, than you had before? You have, therefore, no more right to gratify the desire of the flesh, or the desire of the eyes, now, than when you was a beggar. Oh no! Do not make so poor a return to your beneficent Lord! Rather the more he entrusts you with, be so much the more careful to employ every mite as he hath appointed.

13. Ye angels of God, ye servants of his, that continually do his pleasure: our common Lord hath entrusted you also with talents far more precious than gold and silver, that you may minister in your various offices to the heirs of salvation! Do not you employ every mite of what you have received, to the end for which it was given you? And hath he not directed us to do his will on earth, as it is done by you in heaven? Brethren, what are we doing? Let us awake! Let us arise! Let us imitate those flaming ministers! Let us employ our whole soul, body, and substance, according to the will of our Lord! Let us render unto God the things that are God's; even all we are, and all we have!

14. Most of those, who when riches increase set their hearts upon them, do it indirectly in some of the preceding instances. But there are others who do this more directly; being, properly, "lovers of money:" who love it for its own sake; not only for the sake of what it procures. But this vice is very rarely found in children or young persons; but only, or chiefly, in the old; in those that have the least need of money, and the least time to enjoy it. Might not this induce one to think, that, in many cases, it is a penal evil? That it is a sin punishing evil? That when a man has, for many years, hid his precious talent in the earth, God delivers him up to Satan, to punish him by the inordinate love of it? Then it is that he is more and more tormented by that *auri sacra fames*. That execrable hunger after gold, which can never be satisfied. No: it is most true, as the very heathen observes:—*Crescit amor nummi, quantum ipsa pecunia crescit.*—"As money, so the love of money grows; it increases in the same proportion." As in a dropsy, the more you drink, the more you thirst; till that unquenchable thirst plunge you into the fire which never shall be quenched!

15. But is there no way, you may ask, either to prevent or to cure this dire disease? There is one preventive of it: which is also a remedy for it: and I believe there is no other under heaven. It is this: after you have *gained* (with the cautions above given) *all you can*, and *saved all you can*, wanting for nothing; spend not one pound, one shilling, or one penny, to gratify either the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, or the pride of life; or indeed, for any other end than to please and glorify God. Having avoided this rock on the right hand, beware of that on the left. Secondly, *hoard nothing*. Lay up no treasure on earth, but *give all you can;* that is, all you have. I defy all the men upon earth, yea, all the angels in heaven, to find any other way of extracting the poison from riches.

16. Let me add one word more. After having served you between sixty and seventy years; with dim eyes, shaking hands, and tottering feet, I give you one more advice before I sink into the dust. Mark those words of St. Paul: "Those that desire [or endeavour] to be rich

[that moment] fall into temptation:" yea, a deep gulf of temptation, out of which nothing less than almighty power can deliver them. "They fall into a snare;"—the word properly means *a steel trap*, which instantly crushes the animal taken, to pieces;—"and into divers foolish and hurtful desires, which plunge men into destruction and perdition." You, above all men, who now prosper in the world, never forget these awful words! How unspeakably slippery is your path! How dangerous every step! The Lord God enable you to see your danger, and make you deeply sensible of it! Oh may you "awake up after his likeness, and be satisfied with it!"

17. Permit me to come a little closer still. Perhaps I may not trouble you any more on this head. I am pained for you that are "rich in this world." Do you give all you can? You who receive five hundred pounds a year, and spend only two hundred, do you give three hundred back to God? If not, you certainly rob God of that three hundred. You that receive two hundred, and spend but one, do you give God the other hundred? If not, you rob him of just so much. "Nay, may I not do what I will with *my own?*" Here lies the ground of your mistake. It is not your *own*. It cannot be, unless you are lord of heaven and earth. "However, I must provide for my children." Certainly But how? By making them rich? Then you will probably make them heathens, as some of you have done already. "What shall I do then?" Lord, speak to their hearts! else the preacher speaks in vain. Leave them enough to live on, not in idleness and luxury, but by honest industry. And if you have not children, upon what scriptural or rational principle can you leave a groat behind you more than will bury you? I pray consider, what are you the better for what you leave behind you? What does it signify, whether you leave behind you ten thousand pounds, or ten thousand shoes and boots? Oh leave nothing behind you! Send all you have before you into a better world! Lend it, lend it all unto the Lord, and it shall be paid you again. Is there any danger that *his* truth should fail? It is fixed as the pillars of heaven. Haste, haste, my brethren, haste! lest you be called away before you have settled what you have on this security! When this is done, you may boldly say, "Now I have nothing to do but to die! Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit! Come, Lord Jesus; come quickly."

Bristol, September 21, 1790.

SERMON CXXXI.—*True Christianity Defended*

[THE following sermon was found in a mutilated manuscript among Mr. Wesley's papers. It is dated June 24, 1741. A Latin copy of the same discourse has also been discovered. Mr. Pawson, with great care, copied the former, and I have supplied the deficiencies out of the latter On collating both sermons, I find several variations, and though not of any great importance, yet sufficient, in my judgment, to vindicate the propriety of translating and publishing the Latin one, not merely as a matter of curiosity, but of utility. The sermon, no doubt, was written with the design of being preached before the university of Oxford; but whether it ever were preached there, cannot be determined. A. CLARKE.]

"How is the faithful city become a harlot!" Isa. i, 21.

1. WHEN I bring the sword upon a land, saith the Lord, if the watchman blow the trumpet, and warn the people; then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword

come and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand," Ezek. xxxiii, 2–6.

2. It cannot be doubted, but that word of the Lord is come unto every minister of Christ also. "So thou, oh son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, Oh wicked man, thou shalt surely die: if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand."

3. Nor ought any man therefore to be counted our enemy because he telleth us the truth: the doing of which is indeed an instance of love to our neighbour, as well as of obedience to God. Otherwise few would undertake so thankless a task: for the return, they will find, they know already. The Scripture must be fulfilled. "Me the world hateth," saith our Lord, "because I testify of it that the deeds thereof are evil."

4. It is from a full, settled conviction, that I owe this labour of love to my brethren, and to my tender parent,* by whom I have been nourished for now more than twenty years, and from whom, under God, I have received those advantages, of which, I trust, I shall retain a grateful sense, till my spirit returns to God who gave it: it is, I say, from a full conviction, that love and gratitude, as well as that dispensation of the gospel wherewith I am entrusted, require it of me, that even I have undertaken to speak on a needful, though unwelcome subject. I would indeed have wished that some more acceptable person would have done this. But should all hold their peace, the very stones would cry out, "How is the faithful city become a harlot!"

5. How faithful she was once to our Lord, to whom she had been betrothed as a chaste virgin, let not only the writings of her sons, which shall be had in honour throughout all generations, but also the blood of her martyrs, speak; a stronger testimony of her faithfulness than could be given by words, even

"By all the speeches of the babbling earth."

But how is she now become a harlot! How hath she departed from her Lord! How hath she denied him, and listened to the voice of strangers; both

I. In respect of doctrine, and

II. Of practice.

I. In respect of doctrine. 1. It cannot be said that all our writers are setters forth of strange doctrines. There are those who expound the oracles of God by the same spirit wherewith they are written; and who faithfully cleave to the solid foundation which our church hath laid agreeable thereto; touching which we have his word who cannot lie "That the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." There are those also, (blessed be the Author of every good gift,) who, as wise master builders, build thereon not hay or stubble, but gold and precious stones, but that charity which never faileth.

2. We have likewise cause to give thanks to the Father of lights, for that he hath not left himself without witness; but that there are those

* The university of Oxford.

who now preach the gospel of peace, the truth as it is in Jesus. But how few are these in comparison of those (οι καπηλευοντες) who *adulterate* the word of God! How little wholesome food have we for our souls, and what abundance of poison! How few are there that, either in writing or preaching, declare the genuine gospel of Christ, in the simplicity and purity wherewith it is set forth in the venerable records of our own church! And how are we inclosed on every side with those who, neither knowing the doctrines of our church, nor the Scriptures, nor the power of God, have found out to themselves inventions wherewith they constantly corrupt others also!

3. I speak not now of those (πρωτοτοκοι του Σατανα) *first-born of Satan*, the deists, Arians or Socinians. These are too infamous among us to do any great service to the cause of their master. But what shall we say of those who are accounted the pillars of our church, and champions of our faith; who indeed betray that church, and sap the very foundations of the faith we are taught thereby?

4. But how invidious a thing it is to show this! Who is sufficient to bear the weight of prejudice which must necessarily follow the very mention of such a charge against men of so established a character? Nay, and who have indeed, in many other respects, done great service to the church of God? Yet must every faithful minister say, "God forbid that I should accept any man's person." I dare not give any man flattering titles, nor spare any that corrupt the gospel. "In so doing my Maker would soon take me away."

5. Let me, however, be as short as may be upon this head; and I will instance only in two or three men of renown, who have endeavoured to sap the very foundation of our church, by attacking its fundamental, and indeed the fundamental doctrine of all the reformed churches, viz. justification by faith alone.

One of these, and one of the highest station in our church, hath written and printed, before his death, several sermons, expressly to prove, that not *faith alone*, but *good works* also, are necessary in order to justification. The unpleasing task of quoting particular passages out of them is superseded by the very title of them; which is this: "The necessity of regeneration, (which he at large proves to imply holiness both of heart and life,) in order to justification."*

6. It may appear strange to some, that an angel of the church of God, (as the great Shepherd terms the overseers of it,) and one so highly esteemed both in our own and many other nations, should coolly and calmly thus speak. But, oh what is he in comparison of the great bishop Bull! Who shall be able to stand, if this eminent scholar, Christian, and prelate, in his youth wrote and published to the world, and in his riper years defended, the positions that follow:—

"A man is said (εξ εργων δικαιουται) *to be justified by works*; because good works are the condition, according to the divine appointment, established in the gospel covenant, requisite and necessary to a man's justification; that is, to his obtaining remission of sins through Christ," Bulli Harm. Apost. p. 4.

A little after, being about to produce testimonies in proof of this proposition, he says, "The first class of these shall be those who speak of good works in a general sense, as the requisite and necessary condition

* Tillotson's sermons, vol. 1. &c

of justification." Then follow certain texts of Scripture, after which he adds; "Who does not believe that in these scriptures there is an abundance of good works required, which if a man do not perform, he is altogether excluded from the hope of pardon, and remission of sins," ibid. p. 6.

Having introduced some other things, he adds, "Besides *faith*, there is no one but may see, that *repentance* is required as necessary to justification Now, repentance is not one work alone, but is, as it were, a collection of many others: for in its compass the following works are comprehended: 1. Sorrow on account of sin. 2. Humiliation under the hand of God. 3. Hatred to sin. 4. Confession of sin. 5. Ardent supplication of the Divine mercy. 6. The love of God. 7. Ceasing from sin. 8. Firm purpose of new obedience. 9. Restitution of ill gotten goods. 10. Forgiving our neighbour his transgressions against us. 11. Works of beneficence or alms giving. How much these things avail to procure remission of sins from God is sufficiently evident from Dan. iv, 24, where the prophet gives this wholesome advice to Nebuchadnezzar, who was at that time cleaving to his sins; "Redeem* your sins by alms giving, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor," ibid. p. 10.

7. To instance in one point more. All the liturgy of the church is full of petitions for that holiness without which, the Scripture every where declares, no man shall see the Lord. And these are all summed up in those comprehensive words, which we are supposed to be so frequently repeating: "Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy name." It is evident, that in the last clause of this petition, all outward holiness is contained: neither can it be carried to a greater height, or expressed in stronger terms. And those words, "Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts," contain the negative branch of inward holiness; the height and depth of which is purity of heart, by the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit: the remaining words, "That we may perfectly love thee," contain the positive part of holiness: seeing this love, which is the fulfilling of the law, implies the whole mind that was in Christ.

8. But how does the general stream of writers and preachers (let me be excused the invidious task of instancing in particular persons) agree with this doctrine? Indeed, not at all. Very few can we find who simply and earnestly enforce it. But very many who write and preach as if Christian holiness or religion, were a purely negative thing; as if, not to curse or swear, not to lie or slander, not to be a drunkard, a thief, or a whoremonger, not to speak or do evil, was religion enough to entitle a man to heaven! How many, if they go something farther than this, describe it only as an outward thing! As if it consisted chiefly, if not wholly, in doing good, (as it is called,) and using the means of grace! Or should they go a little farther still, yet what do they add to this poor account of religion? Why, perhaps, that a man should be orthodox in his opinions, and have a zeal for the constitution in church and state. And this is all? This is all the religion they can allow, without degenerating into enthusiasm! So true it is, that the faith of a

* The bishop translates פרק, *peruk*, with the Vulgate, *redeem*, or *buy off*; but the proper and literal meaning is *break off*. A. C.

devil and the life of a heathen, make up what most men call a *good Christian!*

9. But why should we seek farther witnesses of this? Are there not many present here who are of the same opinion? Who believe that a good moral man and a good Christian mean the same thing? That a man need not trouble himself any farther, if he only practises as much Christianity as was written over the heathen emperor's gate: "Do as thou wouldst be done unto:" especially if he be not an infidel, or a heretic, but believes all that the bible and the church say is true.

10. I would not be understood, as if I despised these things, as if I undervalued right opinions, true morality, or a zealous regard for the constitution we have received from our fathers. Yet what are these things being alone? What will they profit us in that day? What will it avail to tell the Judge of all, "Lord, I was not as other men were; not unjust, not an adulterer, not a liar, not an immoral man?" Yea, what will it avail, if we have done all good, as well as done no harm? If we have given all our goods to feed the poor, and have not charity? How shall we then look on those who taught us to sleep on and take our rest, though "the love of the Father was not in us?" Or who, teaching us to seek salvation by works, cut us off from receiving that faith freely, whereby alone the love of God could have been shed abroad in our hearts?

To these miserable corrupters of the gospel of Christ, and the poison they have spread abroad, is chiefly owing,

II. Secondly, That general corruption in practice as well as in doctrine. There is hardly to be found, (oh tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon,) either the form of godliness, or the power! So is "the faithful city become a harlot!"

1. With grief of heart I speak it, and not with joy, that scarcely is the form of godliness seen among us. We are all indeed called to be saints, and the very name of Christians means no less. But who has so much as the appearance? Take any one you meet: take a second, a third, a fourth, or the twentieth. Not one of them has even the appearance of a saint, any more than of an angel. Observe his look, his air, his gesture! Does it breathe nothing but God? Does it bespeak a temple of the Holy Ghost? Observe his conversation: not an hour only, but day by day. Can you gather from any outward sign, that God dwelleth in his heart? That this is an everlasting spirit, who is going to God? Would you imagine that the blood of Christ was shed for that soul, and had purchased everlasting salvation for it, and that God was now waiting till that salvation should be wrought out with fear and trembling?

2. Should it be said, Why, what signifies the form of godliness? We readily answer, nothing; if it be alone. But the absence of the form signifies much. It infallibly proves the absence of the power. For though the form may be without the power, yet the power cannot be without the form. Outward religion may be where inward is not: but if there is none without, there can be none within.

3. But it may be said, we have public prayers both morning and evening in all our colleges. It is true, and it were to be wished that all the members thereof, more especially the elder, those of note and character, would, by constantly attending them, show how sensible they

are of the invaluable privilege. But have all who attend them the form of godliness? Before those solemn addresses to God begin, does the behaviour of all who are present show, that they know before whom they stand? What impression appears to be left on their minds when those holy offices are ended? And even during their continuance; can it be reasonably inferred from the tenor of their outward behaviour, that their hearts are earnestly fixed on him who standeth in the midst of them? I much fear, were a heathen, who understood not our tongue, to come into one of these, our assemblies, he would suspect nothing less, than that we were pouring out our hearts before the majesty of heaven and earth. What then shall we say, if indeed "God is not mocked;" but "what a man soweth, that also shall he reap?"

4. On Sundays, however, say some, it cannot be denied that we have the form of godliness, having sermons preached both morning and afternoon, over and above the morning and evening service. But do we keep the rest of the sabbath day holy? Is there no needless visiting upon it? No trifling? no impertinence of conversation? Do neither you yourself do any unnecessary work upon it, nor suffer others, over whom you have any power, to break the laws of God and man herein? If you do, even in this, you have nothing whereof to boast. But herein also you are guilty before God.

5. But if we have the form of godliness on one day in a week, is there not on other days what is quite contrary thereto? Are not the best of our conversing hours spent in foolish talking and jesting, which are not convenient? Nay, perhaps, in wanton talking too; such as modest ears could not bear? Are there not many among us found to eat and drink with the drunken? And if so, what marvel is it that our profaneness should also go up into the heavens, and our oaths and curses into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth?

6. And even as to the hours assigned for study, are they generally spent to any better purpose? Not if they are employed in reading (as is too common) plays, novels, or idle tales, which naturally tend to increase our inbred corruption, and heat the furnace of our unholy desires, seven times hotter than it was before! How little preferable is the laborious idleness of those who spend day after day in gaming or diversions, vilely casting away that time, the value of which they cannot know, till they are passed through it into eternity!

7. Know ye not then so much as this, you that are called moral men, that all idleness is immorality? That there is no grosser dishonesty than sloth? That every voluntary blockhead is a knave? He defrauds his benefactors, his parents, and the world; and robs both God and his own soul. Yet how many of these are among us! How many lazy drones, as if only, *Fruges consumere nati!* "Born to eat up the produce of the soil." How many whose ignorance is not owing to incapacity, but to mere laziness! How few, (let it not seem immodest that even such a one as I should touch on that tender point,) of the vast number who have it in their power, are truly learned men! Not to speak of the other eastern tongues, who is there that can be said to understand Hebrew? Might I not say, or even Greek? A little of Homer, or Xenophon, we may still remember; but how few can readily read or understand so much as a page of Clemens Alexandrinus, Chrysostom, or Ephrem Syrus? And as to philosophy, (not to mention

mathematics, or the abstruser branches of it,) how few do we find who have laid the foundation, who are masters even of logic? who thoroughly understand so much as the rules of syllogizing? the very doctrine of the moods and figures? Oh what is so scarce as learning, save religion?

8. And indeed learning will be seldom found without religion; for temporal views, as experience shows, will very rarely suffice, to carry one through the labour required to be a thorough scholar. Can it then be dissembled, that there is too often a defect in those to whom the care of youth is entrusted? Is that solemn direction sufficiently considered: (Statut. p. 7:) "Let the tutor diligently instruct those scholars committed to his care in strict morality, and especially in the first principles of religion, and in the articles of doctrine?"

And do they to whom this important charge is given, labour diligently to lay this good foundation? To fix true principles of religion in the minds of the youth entrusted with them, by their lectures? To recommend the practice thereof by the powerful and pleasing influence of their example? To enforce this by frequent private advice, earnestly and strongly inculcated? To observe the progress, and carefully inquire into the behaviour of every one of them? In a word, to watch over their souls, as they that must give account?

9. Suffer me, since I have begun to speak upon this head, to go a little farther. Is there sufficient care taken that they should know and keep the statutes which we are all engaged to observe? How then is it that they are so notoriously broken every day? To instance only in a few:

It is appointed, as to divine offices and preaching, "That ALL shall publicly attend:—graduates and scholars shall attend punctually, and continue till all be finished, with due reverence from the beginning to the end," p. 181.

It is appointed, "That scholars of every rank shall abstain from all kinds of play where money is contended for; such as cards, dice, and bowls; nor shall they be present at public games of this nature," p. 157.

It is appointed, "That all (the sons of noblemen excepted) shall accustom themselves to black or dark coloured clothing; and that they shall keep at the utmost distance from pomp and extravagance," p. 157.

It is appointed, "That scholars of every rank shall abstain from ale houses, inns, taverns, and from every place within the city where wine, or any other kind of liquor, is ordinarily sold," p. 164.

10. It will be objected, perhaps, "That these are but little things." Nay, but perjury is not a little thing: nor, consequently, the wilful breach of any rule, which we have solemnly sworn to observe. Surely those who speak thus have forgotten those words: "Thou shalt pledge thy faith to observe all the statutes of this university. So help thee God, and the holy inspired gospels of Christ!" p. 229.

11. But is this oath sufficiently considered by those who take it? Or any of those prescribed by public authority? Is not this solemn act of religion, the calling God to record on our souls, commonly treated as a slight thing? In particular by those who swear by the living God, "That neither entreaties nor reward; neither hatred nor friendship; neither hope nor fear, induce them to give a testimony to any unworthy person?" p 88. And by those who swear, "I know this person to

be meet and fit in morals and knowledge for that high degree to which he is presented?" p. 114.

12. Yet one thing more. We have all testified before God, "That all and every, the articles of our church, as also the book of common prayer, and the ordaining of bishops, priests, and deacons, are agreeable to the word of God." And in so doing we have likewise testified, "That both the first and the second book of homilies, doth contain godly and wholesome doctrine." But upon what evidence have many of us declared this? Have we not affirmed the thing we know not? If so, however true they may happen to be, we are found false witnesses before God. Have the greater part of us ever used any means to know whether these things are so or not? Have we ever, for one hour, seriously considered the articles to which we have subscribed? If not, how shamefully do we elude the design of the very compilers, who compiled them, "to remove difference of opinion, and to establish unanimity in the true religion?"

13. Have we half of us read over the book of common prayer, and of ordaining bishops, priests, and deacons? If not, what is it we have so solemnly confirmed? In plain terms, we cannot tell. And as to the two books of homilies, it is well if a tenth part of those who have subscribed to them, I will not say, had considered them before they did this, but if they have even read them over to this day! Alas, my brethren! how shall we reconcile these things even to common honesty, to plain heathen morality? So far are those who do them, nay, and perhaps defend them too, from having even the form of Christian godliness!

14. But waiving all these things, where is the power? Who are the living witnesses of this? Who among us, (let God witness with our hearts) experimentally knows the force of inward holiness? Who feels in himself the workings of the Spirit of Christ, drawing up his mind to high and heavenly things? Who can witness,—"The thoughts of my heart God hath cleansed by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit?" Who knoweth that "peace of God which passeth all understanding?" Who is he that "rejoiceth with joy unspeakable and full of glory?" Whose "affections are set on things above, not on things of the earth?" Whose "life is hid with Christ in God?" Who can say, "I am crucified with Christ: yet I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life that I now live in the body, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me?" In whose heart is the "love of God shed abroad, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto him?"

15. Is not almost the very notion of this religion lost? Is there not a gross overflowing ignorance of it? Nay, is it not utterly despised? Is it not wholly set at nought, and trodden under foot? Were any one to witness these things before God, would he not be accounted a mad man, an enthusiast? Am not I unto you a barbarian, who speak thus? My brethren, my heart bleeds for you. Oh that you would at length take knowledge, and understand that these are the words of truth and soberness! Oh that you knew, at least in this your day, the things that make for your peace!

16. I have been a messenger of heavy tidings this day. But the love of Christ constraineth me; and to me it was the less grievous, because for you it was safe. I desire not to accuse the children of my people. Therefore, neither do I speak thus in the ears of them that sit on the

wall: but to you I endeavour to speak the truth in love, as a faithful minister of Jesus Christ. And I can now "call you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."

17. May the God of all grace, who is long suffering, of tender mercy, and repenteth him of the evil, fix these things in your hearts, and water the seed he hath sown with the dew of heaven! May he correct whatsoever he seeth amiss in us! may he supply whatsoever is wanting! may he perfect that which is according to his will; and so establish strengthen, and settle us, that this place may again be a faithful city to her Lord, yea, the praise of the whole earth!

SERMON CXXXII.—*On Mourning for the Dead.*

Preached at Epworth, January 11, 1726, *at the funeral of John Griffith; a hopeful young man.*

"Now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him; but he shall not return to me," 2 Sam. xii, 23.

THE resolution of a wise and good man, just recovering the use of his reason and virtue, after the bitterness of soul he had tasted, from the hourly expectation of the death of a beloved son, is comprised in these few, but strong words. He had fasted and wept, and lay all night upon the earth, and refused not only comfort, but even needful sustenance, whilst the child was still alive, in hopes that God would be gracious, as well in that, as in other instances, and reverse the just sentence he had pronounced: when it was put in execution in the death of the child, he arose, and changed his apparel, having first paid his devotions to his Great Master, acknowledging, no doubt, the mildness of his severity, and owning with gratitude and humility, the obligation laid upon him, in that he was not consumed, as well as chastened, by his heavy hand; he then came into his house, and behaved with his usual composure and cheerfulness. The reason of this strange alteration in his proceedings, as it appeared to those who were ignorant of the principles upon which he acted, he here explains, with great brevity, but in the most beautiful language, strength of thought, and energy of expression: "Now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him; but he shall not return to me."

To what end (saith the resigned mourner) should I fast now the child is dead? Why should I add grief to grief; which, being a volunteer, increases the affliction I already sustain? Would it not be equally useless to him and me? Have my tears or complaints the power to refix his soul in her decayed and forsaken mansion? Or, indeed, would he wish to change, though the power were in his hands, the happy regions of which he is now possessed, for this land of care, pain, and misery? Oh vain thought! Never can he, never will he, return to me: be it my comfort, my constant comfort, when my sorrows bear hard upon me, that I shall shortly, very shortly go to him! that I shall soon awake

from this tedious dream of life, which will soon be at an end; and then shall I gaze upon him: then shall I behold him again, and behold him with that perfect love, that sincere and elevated affection, to which even the heart of a parent is here a stranger! When the Lord God shall wipe away all tears from my eyes; and the least part of my happiness shall be, that the sorrow of absence shall flee away!

The unprofitable and bad consequences, the sinful nature, of profuse sorrowing for the dead, are easily deduced from the former part of this reflection: in the latter, we have the strongest motives to enforce our striving against it;—a remedy exactly suited to the disease;—a consideration, which, duly applied, will not fail, either to prevent this sorrow, or rescue us from this real misfortune.

Grief, in general, is the parent of so much evil, and the occasion of so little good to mankind, that it may be justly wondered how it found a place in our nature. It was, indeed, of man's own, not of God's, creation: who may permit, but never was the author of evil. The same hour gave birth to grief and sin, as the same moment will deliver us from both. For neither did exist before human nature was corrupted, nor will it continue when that is restored to its ancient perfection.

Indeed in this present state of things, that wise Being who knows well how to extract good out of evil, has shown us one way of making this universal frailty highly conducive both to our virtue and happiness. Even grief, if it lead us to repentance, and proceed from a serious sense of our faults, is not to be repented of, since those who thus sow in tears shall reap in joy. If we confine it to this particular occasion, it does not impair, but greatly assist, our imperfect reason: pain, either of body or mind, acting quicker than reflection, and fixing more deeply in the memory any circumstance it attends.

From the very nature of grief, which is an uneasiness in the mind on the apprehension of some present evil, it appears, that its arising in us, on any other occasion than that of sin, is entirely owing to our want of judgment. Are any of those accidents, in the language of men termed misfortunes, such as reproach, poverty, loss of life, or even of friends, real evils? So far from it, that if we dare believe our Creator, they are often positive blessings. They all work together for our good. And our Lord accordingly commands us, even when the severest loss, that of our reputation, befalls us, if it is in a good cause, as it must be our own fault if it be not, to "rejoice, and be exceeding glad."

But what fully proves the utter absurdity of almost all our grief, except that for our own failings, is, that the occasion of it is always past before it begins. To recall what has already been is utterly impossible, and beyond the reach of Omnipotence itself. Let those who are fond of misery, if any such there be, indulge their minds in this fruitless inquietude. They who desire happiness will have a care how they cherish such a passion, as is neither desirable in itself, nor serves to any good purpose, present or future.

If any species of this unprofitable passion be more particularly useless than the rest, it is that which we feel when we sorrow for the dead. We destroy the health of our body, and impair the strength of our minds, and take no price for those invaluable blessings: we give up our present, without any prospect of future, advantage; without any probability of either recalling them hither or profiting them where they are

As it is an indifferent proof of our wisdom, it is still a worse of our affection for the dead. It is the property of envy, not of love, to repine at another's happiness; to weep, because all tears are wiped from their eyes. Shall it disturb us, who call ourselves his friends, that a weary wanderer has, at length, come to his wished for home? Nay, weep we rather for ourselves, who still want that happiness; even to whom that rest appeareth yet in prospect.

Gracious is our God and merciful, who, knowing what is in man, that *passion*, when it has conquered reason, always takes the appearance of it, lest we should be misled by this appearance, adds the sanction of his unerring commands, to the natural dictates of our own understanding. The judgment, perhaps, might be so clouded by passion, as to think it reasonable to be profuse in our sorrow at parting from a beloved object; but revelation tells us, that all occurrences of life must be borne with patience and moderation; (otherwise we lay a greater weight on our own souls, than external accidents can do without our concurrence;) with humility,—because from the offended justice of God we might well have expected he would have inflicted much worse; and with resignation,—because we know, whatsoever happens is for our good; and although it were not, we are not able to contend with, and should not therefore provoke, Him that is stronger than we.

Against this fault, which is inconsistent with those virtues, and therefore tacitly forbidden in the precepts that enjoin them, St. Paul warns us in express words: "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him:—Wherefore comfort one another with these words," 1 Thess. iv, 13, 18. And these, indeed, are the only words which can give lasting comfort to a spirit, whom such an occasion hath wounded. Why should I be so unreasonable, so unkind, as to desire the return of a soul now in happiness to me; to this habitation of sin and misery; since I know that the time will come, yea, is now at hand, when, in spite of the great gulf fixed between us, I shall shake off these chains and go to him?

What he was, I am both unable to paint in suitable colours, and unwilling to attempt it. Although the chief, at least the most common, argument, for those laboured encomiums on the dead, which for many years have so much prevailed among us, is, that there can be no suspicion of flattery; yet we all know, that the pulpit, on those occasions, has been so frequently prostituted to those servile ends, that it is now no longer capable of serving them. Men take it for granted, that what is there said, are words of course; that the business of the speaker is to describe the beauty, not the likeness, of the picture; and so it be only well drawn, he cares not whom it resembles: in a word, that his business is to show his own wit, not the generosity of his friend, by giving him all the virtues he can think on.

This, indeed, is an end that is visibly served in those ill timed commendations: of what other use they are it is hard to say. It is of no service to the dead to celebrate his actions; since he has the applause of God, and his holy angels, and also that of his own conscience. And it is of very little use to the living: since he who desires a pattern, may

find enough proposed as such in the sacred writings. What, must one be raised from the dead to instruct him, while Moses, the prophets, and the blessed Jesus, are still presented to his view in those everlasting tables? Certain it is, that he who will not imitate these, would not be converted, though one literally rose from the dead.

Let it suffice to have paid my last duty to him, (whether he is now hovering over these lower regions, or retired already to the mansions of eternal glory,) by saying, in a few plain words, such as were his own, and were always agreeable to him, that he was to his parents an affectionate, dutiful son; to his acquaintance, an ingenuous, cheerful, good natured companion; and to me, a well tried, sincere friend.

At such a loss, if considered without the alleviating circumstances, who can blame him that drops a tear? The tender meltings of a heart dissolved with fondness, when it reflects on the several agreeable moments which have now taken their flight, never to return, gives an authority to some degree of sorrow. Nor will human frailty permit an ordinary acquaintance to take his last leave of them without it. Who then can conceive, much less describe, the strong emotion, the secret workings of soul, which a parent feels on such an occasion? None, surely, but those who are parents themselves: unless those few who have experienced the power of friendship; than which human nature, on this side of the grave, knows no closer, no softer, no stronger tie!

At the tearing asunder of these sacred bands, well may we allow, without blame, some parting pangs: but the difficulty is, to put as speedy a period to them, as reason and religion command us. What can give us sufficient ease after that rupture, which has left such an aching void in our breasts? What, indeed, but the reflection already mentioned, which can never be inculcated too often,—that we are hastening to him ourselves; that, pass but a few years, perhaps hours, which will soon be over, and not only this, but all other desires will be satisfied; when we shall exchange the gaudy shadow of pleasure we have enjoyed, for sincere, substantial, untransitory happiness?

With this consideration well imprinted in our minds, it is far better, as Solomon observes, to go to the house of mourning, than to the house of feasting. The one unbraces the soul, disarms our resolution, and lays us open to an attack. The other cautions us to recollect our reason, and stand upon our guard, and infuses that noble steadiness, and seriousness of temper, which it is not in the power of an ordinary stroke to discompose. Such objects naturally induce us to lay it to heart, that the next summons may be our own; and that since death is the end of all men without exception, it is high time for the living to lay it to heart

If we are, at any time, in danger of being overcome by dwelling too long on the gloomy side of this prospect, to the giving us pain, the making us unfit for the duties and offices of life, impairing our faculties of body or mind,—which proceedings, as has been already shown, are both absurd, unprofitable, and sinful; let us immediately recur to the bright side, and reflect, with gratitude as well as humility, that our time passeth away like a shadow; and that, when we awake from this momentary dream, we shall then have a clearer view of that latter day, in which our Redeemer shall stand upon the earth: when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall be clothed with

immortality; and when we shall sing, with the united choirs of men and angels, "Oh death, where is thy sting? Oh grave, where is thy victory?"

SERMON CXXXIII.—*On Corrupting the Word of God.*

Preached about the year, 1728.

"We are not as many, who corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ," 2 Cor. ii, 17.

MANY have observed, that nothing conduces more to a preacher's success with those that hear him, than a general good opinion of his sincerity. Nothing gives him a greater force of persuasion than this; nothing creates either a greater attention in the hearers, or a greater disposition to improve. When they really believe that he has no other end in speaking, but what he fairly carries in view, and that he is willing that they should see all the steps he takes for the attainment of that end,—it must give them a strong presumption, both that what he seeks is good, and the method in which he seeks it.

But how to possess them with this belief is the question. How shall we bring them to take notice of our sincerity, if they do not advert to it of themselves? One good way, however common, is, frankly and openly to profess it. There is something in these professions, when they come from the heart, strongly insinuating into the hearts of others. Persons of any generosity that hear them, find themselves almost forced to believe them; and even those who believe them not, are obliged in prudence, not to let their incredulity appear, since it is a known rule, —the honester any man is, the less apt is he to suspect another. The consequence whereof is plain: whoever, without proof, is suspicious of his neighbour's sincerity, gives a probable proof, that he judges of his heart from the falseness of his own.

Would not any man be tempted to suspect his integrity, who, without proof, suspected the want of it in another, that had fairly and openly professed the principles on which he acted? Surely none, but such as had corrupted the word of God, or wished that it were corrupted, could lightly suspect either St. Paul of doing it, or any that after him should use his generous declaration: "We are not as many, who corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ."

Not that the apostle any more than his followers in preaching the gospel, desires the people wholly to rely on his words: for afterwards he appeals to his actions to confirm them. And those who in this can imitate him, need not to entreat men to believe their sincerity. If our works bear the stamp of it, as well as our words, both together will speak so loudly and plainly, that every unprejudiced person must understand that we speak in Christ, as in sincerity, and that in so doing we consider we are in the sight of that God, whose commission we bear.

Those whom the apostle accuses of the contrary practice, of corrupting the word of God, seem to have been Jews, who owned Jesus to be the Christ, and his gospel to be divine, yet adulterated it, by

intermingling with it the law of Moses, and their own traditions. And in doing this, their principal view was, to make a gain of Christ; which, consequently, laid them under a necessity of concealing the end they proposed, as well as the means they used in order to obtain it. On the contrary, those who intend the good of mankind, are by no means concerned to hide their intentions. If the benefit we propose in speaking be to ourselves, it is often our interest to keep it private. If the benefit we propose be to others, it is always our interest to make it public; and it is the interest both of ourselves and others, to make public those marks of distinction whence may clearly be known who corrupt the word of God, and who preach it in sincerity.

The first and great mark of one who corrupts the word of God, is, introducing into it human mixtures; either the errors of others, or the fancies of his own brain. To do this, is to corrupt it in the highest degree. To blend with the oracles of God, impure dreams fit only for the mouth of the devil! And yet it has been so frequently done, that scarce ever was any erroneous opinion either invented or received, but scripture was quoted to defend it. And when the imposture was too bare faced, and the texts cited for it appeared too plainly either to make against it, or to be nothing to the purpose; then recourse has usually been had to a second method of corrupting it,—by mixing it with false interpretations. And this is done, sometimes by repeating the words wrong; and sometimes by repeating them right, but putting a wrong sense upon them. One that is either strained and unnatural, or foreign to the writer's intention in the place from whence they are taken. Perhaps contrary either to his intention in that very place, or to what he says in some other part of his writings. And this is easily effected: any passage is easily perverted, by being recited singly, without any of the preceding or following verses. By this means it may often seem to have one sense, when it will be plain, by observing what goes before and what follows after, that it really has the direct contrary. For want of observing which, unwary souls are liable to be tossed about with every wind of doctrine, whenever they fall into the hands of those who have enough of wickedness and cunning, thus to adulterate what they preach, and to add now and then a plausible comment, to make it go down the more easily.

A third sort of those who corrupt the word of God, though in a lower degree than either of the former, are those who do so, not by adding to it, but by taking from it: who take either the spirit or substance of it away, while they study to prophesy only smooth things, and therefore palliate or colour what they preach, in order to reconcile it to the taste of the hearers. And that they may do this the better, they commonly let those parts go that will admit of no colouring They wash their hands of those stubborn texts, that will not bend to their purpose, or that too plainly touch upon the reigning vices of the place where they are. These they exchange for those more soft and tractable ones, that are not so apt to give offence. Not one word must be said of the tribulation and anguish denounced against sinners in general; much less of the unquenchable fire, which, if God be true, awaits several of those particular offences that have fallen within their own notice. These tender parts are not to be touched without danger, by them who study to recommend themselves to men; or if they are,

it must be with the utmost caution, and a nice evasion in reserve. But they may safely thunder against those who are out of their reach, and against those sins which they suppose none that hear them are guilty of. No one takes it to heart, to hear those practices laid open which he is not concerned in himself. But when the stroke comes home, when it reaches his own case, then is he, if not convinced, displeased, or angry, and out of patience.

These are the methods of those corrupters of the word, who act in the sight of men, not of God. He trieth the hearts, and will receive no service in which the lips only are concerned. But their words have no intercourse with their thoughts. Nor is it proper for them that they should. For if their real intention once appeared, it must make itself unsuccessful. They purpose, it is true, to do good by the gospel of Christ, but it is to themselves, not to others. Whereas they that use sincerity in preaching the gospel, in the good of others seek their own. And that they are sincere, and speak as commissioned officers, in the sight of him whose commission they bear, plainly appears from the direct contrariety between their practice, and that of the dissemblers above described.

First: Consider, it is not their own word they preach, but the word of him that sent them. They preach it genuine and unmixed. As they do not only profess, but really believe, that, "If any man add unto the word of God, he will add unto him all the plagues that are written in it;" they are fearful of doing it in the least instance. You have the gospel from them, if in a less elegant manner, yet fair, and as it is; without any mixture of errors to pollute it, or misinterpretation to perplex it: explained in the most natural, obvious manner, by what precedes and what follows the place in question; and commented upon by the most sure way, the least liable to mistake or corruption, the producing of those parallel places that express the same thing the more plainly.

In the next place, they are as cautious of taking from, as of adding to, the word they preach. They dare no more, considering in whose sight they stand, say less, than more, than he hath assigned them. They must publish, as proper occasions offer, all that is contained in the oracles of God; whether smooth or otherwise, it matters nothing, since it is unquestionably true, and useful too: "For all Scripture is given by the inspiration of God; and is profitable either for doctrine, reproof, correction, or instruction in righteousness." Either to teach us what we are to believe or practise, or, for conviction of error, reformation of vice. They know that there is nothing superfluous in it, relating either to faith or practice; and therefore they preach all parts of it, though those more particularly, which are more immediately wanted where they are. They are far from abstaining from speaking against any vice, because it is fashionable, and in repute in the place providence has allotted them; but for that very reason they are more zealous in testifying against it. They are so far from abstaining from speaking for any virtue because it is unfashionable and in disrepute where they are placed, that they therefore the more vigorously recommend it.

Lastly, they who speak in sincerity, and as in the sight of him who deputes them, show that they do so, by the manner in which they speak. They speak with plainness and boldness, and are not concerned to pal-

liate their doctrine, to reconcile it to the taste of men. They endeavour to set it always in a true light, whether it be a pleasing one or not. They will not, they dare not, soften a threatening, so as to prejudice its strength, neither represent sin in such mild colours, as to impair its native blackness. Not that they do not choose mildness, when it is likely to be effectual. Though they know the terrors of the Lord, they desire rather to persuade men. This method they use, and love to use it, with such as are capable of persuasion: with such as are not, they are obliged, if they will be faithful, to take the severer course. Let the revilers look to that; it harms not them: let the hearers accommodate themselves to the word; the word is not, in this sense, to be accommodated to the hearers. The preacher of it would be no less in fault, in a slavish obsequiousness on one side, than in an unrelenting sternness on the other.

If then we have spoken the word of God, the genuine unmixed word of God, and that only; if we have put no unnatural interpretation upon it, but taken the known phrases in their common obvious sense,—and when they were less known, explained Scripture by Scripture; if we have spoken the whole word, as occasion offered, though rather the parts which seemed most proper to give a check to some fashionable vice, or to encourage the practice of some unfashionable virtue; and if we have done this plainly and boldly, though with all the mildness and gentleness that the nature of the subject will bear;—then, believe ye our works, if not our words; or rather, believe them both together. Here is all a preacher can do; all the evidence that he either can or need give of his good intentions. There is no way but this to show that he speaks as of sincerity, as commissioned by the Lord, and as in his sight. If there be any who, after all this, will not believe that it is his concern, not our own, we labour for; that our first intention in speaking, is to point him the way to happiness, and to disengage him from the great road that leads to misery; we are clear of the blood of that man,—it rests on his own head. For thus saith the Lord, who hath set us as watchmen over the souls of our countrymen and brethren; "If they warn the wicked of his way to turn from it;"—much more if we use all methods possible to convince him that the warning is of God;—"if he do not turn from his way,"—which certainly he will not, if he do not believe that we are in earnest,—"he shall die in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thine own soul."

SERMON CXXXIV.—*On the Resurrection of the Dead.*

Written in the year 1732.

"But some man will say, how are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" 1 Cor. xv, 35.

THE apostle having, in the beginning of this chapter, firmly settled the truth of our Saviour's resurrection, adds, "Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you, that there is no resurrection of the dead?" It cannot now any longer seem impossible to you that God should raise the dead; since you have so plain an example of it in our Lord, who was dead and is alive; and the same

power which raised Christ, must also be able to quicken our immortal bodies.

"But some man will say, how are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" How can these things be? How is it possible that these bodies should be raised again, and joined to their several souls which many thousands of years ago were either buried in the earth, or swallowed up in the sea, or devoured by fire?—which have mouldered into the finest dust,—that dust scattered over the face of the earth, dispersed as far as the heavens are wide;—nay, which has undergone ten thousand changes, has fattened the earth, become the food of other creatures, and these again the food of other men? How is it possible that all these little parts, which made up the body of Abraham, should be again ranged together, and, unmixed with the dust of other bodies, be all placed in the same order and posture that they were before, so as to make up the very self same body, which his soul at his death forsook? Ezekiel was indeed, in a vision, set down in a valley full of dry bones, "and he heard a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone; the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them above, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet." This might be in a vision. But that all this, and much more, should in time come to pass; that our bones after they are crumbled into dust, should really become living men;—that all the little parts whereof our bodies were made, should immediately, at a general summons, meet again, and every one challenge and possess its own place, till at last the whole be perfectly rebuilt:—that this, I say, should be done,—is so incredible a thing, that we cannot so much as have any notion of it. And we may observe, that the gentiles were most displeased with this article of the Christian faith: it was one of the last things the heathens believed; and it is to this day the chief objection to Christianity, "How are the dead raised up? With what body do they come?" In my discourse on these words, I shall do three things:—

I. I shall show, that the resurrection of the self same body that died and was buried, contains nothing in it incredible, or impossible.

II. I shall describe the difference which our Saviour makes between the qualities of a glorified, and a mortal body.

III. I shall draw some inferences from the whole.

I. I shall show, that the resurrection of the self same body that died, contains nothing in it incredible, or impossible.

But before I do this, it may be proper to mention some of the reasons upon which this article of our faith is built.

And 1. The plain notion of a resurrection requires, that the self same body that died should rise again. Nothing can be said to be raised again, but that very body that died. If God give to our souls at the last day a new body, this cannot be called the resurrection of our body; because that word plainly implies the fresh production of what was before.

2. There are many places of Scripture that plainly declare it. St. Paul, in the 53d verse of this chapter, tells us, that "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." Now by this mortal, and this corruptible, can only be meant, that body which we now carry about with us, and shall one day lay down in the dust.

The mention which the Scripture makes of the places where the dead shall rise, farther shows, that the same body which died shall rise. Thus we read in Daniel: "Those that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." And, we may likewise observe, that the very phrase, of *sleep* and *awake*, implies, that when we rise again from the dead, our bodies will be as much the same as they are when we awake from sleep. Thus again our Lord affirms; John v, 28, 29, "The hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth; they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation." Now if the same body do not rise again, what need is there of opening the graves at the end of the world? The graves can give up no bodies but those which were laid in them. If we were not to rise with the very same bodies that died, then they might rest for ever. To this we need only add that of St. Paul: "The Lord shall change this vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." Now this vile body, can be no other than that with which we are now clothed, which must be restored to life again.

That in all this, there is nothing incredible or impossible, I shall show, by proving these three things. 1. That it is possible for God to keep and preserve unmixed, from all other bodies, the particular dust into which our several bodies are dissolved, and can gather and join it again, how far soever dispersed asunder. 2. That God can form that dust, so gathered together, into the same body it was before. 3. That when he hath formed this body, he can enliven it with the same soul that before inhabited it.

1. God can distinguish and keep unmixed, from all other bodies, the particular dust into which our several bodies are dissolved, and can gather it together and join it again, how far soever dispersed asunder. God is infinite both in knowledge and power. He knoweth the number of the stars, and calleth them all by their names: he can tell the number of the sands on the sea shore: and is it at all incredible, that he should distinctly know the several particles of dust into which the bodies of men are mouldered, and plainly discern to whom they belong, and the various changes they have undergone? Why should it be thought strange, that he, who at the first formed us, whose eyes saw our substance yet being imperfect, from whom we were not hid when we were made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth, should know every part of our bodies, and every particle of dust whereof we were composed? The artist knows every part of the watch which he frames, and if it should fall in pieces, and the various parts of it lie in the greatest disorder and confusion, yet he can soon gather them together, and as easily distinguish one from another, as if every one had its particular mark. He knows the use of each, and can readily give it its proper place, and put them all exactly in the same figure and order they were before. And can we think that the Almighty Builder of the world, whose workmanship we are, does not know whereof we are made, or is not acquainted with the several parts of which this earthly tabernacle is composed? All these lay in one vast heap at the creation, till he separated them one from another, and framed them into those distinct bodies, whereof this beautiful world

consists. And why may not the same power collect the ruins of our corrupted bodies, and restore them to their former condition? All the parts into which men's bodies are dissolved, however they seem to us carelessly scattered over the face of the earth, are yet carefully laid up by God's wise disposal till the day of the restoration of all things. They are preserved in the waters and fires, in the birds and beasts, till the last trumpet shall summon them to their former habitation.

But, say they, "It may sometimes happen that several men's bodies may consist of the self same matter. For the bodies of men are often devoured by other animals, which are eaten by other men. Nay, there are nations which feed upon human flesh, consequently they borrow a great part of their bodies from other men. And if that which was part of one man's body, becomes afterwards part of another man's, how can both rise at the last day with the same bodies they had before?" To this it may easily be replied, that a very small part of what is eaten turns to nourishment, the far greater part goes away according to the order of nature. So that it is not at all impossible for God, who watches over and governs all this, so to order things, that what is part of one man's body, though eaten by another, shall never turn to his nourishment, or if it does, that it shall wear off again, and some time before his death be separated from him, so that it may remain in a capacity of being restored at the last day to its former owner.

2. God can form this dust, so gathered together, into the same body it was before. And that it is possible all must own, who believe that God made Adam out of the dust of the earth. Therefore the bodies of men being dust after death, it is no other than it was before; and the same power that at the first made it of dust, may as easily remake it, when it is turned into dust again. Nay, it is no more wonderful, than the forming a human body in the womb, which is a thing we have daily experience of, and is doubtless as strange an instance of divine power as the resurrection of it can possibly be. And were it not so common a thing, we should be as hardly brought to think it possible, that such a beautiful fabric as the body of man is, with nerves and bones, flesh and veins, blood, and the several other parts whereof it consists, should be formed, as we know it is, as now we are, that hereafter it should be rebuilt when it has been crumbled into dust. Had we only heard of the wonderful production of the bodies of men, we should have been as ready to ask, How are men made, and with what bodies are they born? as now, when we hear of the resurrection, How are the dead raised up, and with what bodies do they come?

3. When God hath raised this body, he can enliven it with the same soul that inhabited it before. And this we cannot pretend to say is impossible to be done, for it has been done already. Our Saviour himself was dead, rose again, and appeared alive to his disciples and others, who had lived with him many years, and were then fully convinced, that he was the same person they had seen die upon the cross.

Thus have I shown, that the resurrection of the same body is by no means impossible to God. That what he hath promised he is able also to perform, by that "mighty power by which he is able to subdue all things to himself." Though, therefore, we cannot exactly tell the manner how it shall be done, yet this ought not in the least to weaken our belief of this important article of our faith. It is enough, that he,

to whom all things are possible, hath passed his word, that he will raise us again. Let those who presume to mock at the glorious hope of all good men, and are constantly raising objections against it, first try their skill upon the various appearances of nature. Let them explain every thing which they see happen in this world, before they talk of the difficulties of explaining the resurrection. Can they tell me how their own bodies were fashioned, and curiously wrought? Can they give me a plain account, by what orderly steps this glorious stately structure, which discovers so much workmanship and rare contrivance, was at first created? How was the first drop of blood made, and how came the heart and veins, and arteries to receive it? Of what, and by what means, were the nerves and fibres made? What fixed the little springs in their due places, and fitted them for the several uses for which they now serve? How was the brain distinguished from the other parts of the body, and filled with spirits to move and animate the whole? How came the body to be fenced with bones and sinews, to be clothed with skin and flesh, distinguished into various muscles? Let them but answer these few questions about the mechanism of our own bodies, and I will answer all the difficulties concerning the resurrection of them. But if they cannot do this without having recourse to the infinite power and wisdom of the First Cause, let them know that the same power and wisdom can reanimate it, after it is turned into dust. And that there is no reason for our doubting concerning the thing, because there are some circumstances belonging to it which we cannot perfectly comprehend, or give a distinct account of.

II. I now proceed to the second thing I proposed, which was, to describe the difference the Scripture makes between the qualities of a mortal, and of a glorified body.

The change which shall be made in our bodies at the resurrection, according to the Scripture account, will consist chiefly in these four things: 1. That our bodies shall be raised immortal and incorruptible. 2. That they shall be raised in glory. 3. That they shall be raised in power. 4. That they shall be raised spiritual bodies.

1. The body that we shall have at the resurrection, shall be immortal and incorruptible: "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." Now these words *immortal* and *incorruptible*, not only signify, that we shall die no more; for in that sense the damned are immortal and incorruptible; but that we shall be perfectly free from all the bodily evils which sin brought into the world. That our bodies shall not be subject to sickness, or pain, or any other inconveniences we are daily exposed to. This the Scripture calls "the redemption of our bodies;" the freeing them from all their maladies. Were we to receive them again, subject to all the frailties and miseries which we are forced to wrestle with, I much doubt whether a wise man, were he left to his choice, would willingly take his again;—whether he would not choose to let his still lie rotting in the grave, rather than to be again chained to such a cumbersome clod of earth. Such a resurrection would be, as a wise heathen calls it, "A resurrection to another sleep." It would look more like a redemption to death again, than a resurrection to life.

The best thing we can say of this house of earth, is, That it is a ruinous building, and will not be long before it tumbles into dust; that

it is not our home: we look for another house, eternal in the heavens. That we shall not always be confined here, but that in a little time we shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, from this burden of flesh, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. What frail things these bodies of ours are! How soon are they disordered! To what a troop of diseases, pains and other infirmities are they constantly subject! And how does the least distemper disturb our minds, and make life itself a burthen! Of how many parts do our bodies consist! And if one of these be disordered, the whole man suffers. If but one of these slender threads, whereof our flesh is made up, be stretched beyond its due proportion, or fretted by any sharp humour, or broken, what torment does it create! Nay, when our bodies are at the best, what pains do we take to answer their necessities, to provide for their sustenance, to preserve them in health, and to keep them tenantable, in some tolerable fitness for our souls' use! And what time we can spare from our labour is taken up in rest, and refreshing our jaded bodies, and fitting them for work again. How are we forced, even naturally, into the confines of death; even to cease to be;—at least to pass so many hours without any useful or reasonable thoughts, merely to keep them in repair! But our hope and comfort are, that we shall shortly be delivered from this burthen of flesh. When "God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away." Oh when shall we arrive at that happy land where no complaints were ever heard, where we shall all enjoy unin terrupted health both of body and mind, and never more be exposed to any of those inconveniences that disturb our present pilgrimage! When we shall have once passed from death unto life, we shall be eased of all the troublesome care of our bodies, which now takes up so much of our time and thoughts. We shall be set free from all those mean and tiresome labours which we must now undergo to support our lives. Yon robes of light, with which we shall be clothed at the resurrection of the just, will not stand in need of those careful provisions which it is so troublesome to us here either to procure, or to be without. But then, as our Lord tells us, "Those who shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, neither marry nor are given in marriage, neither can they die any more, but they are equal to the angels." Their bodies are neither subject to disease, nor want that daily sustenance, which these mortal bodies cannot be without. "Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats; but God will destroy both it and them." This is that perfect happiness which all good men shall enjoy in the other world. A mind free from all trouble and guilt, in a body free from all pains and diseases. Thus our mortal bodies shall be raised immortal. They shall not only be always preserved from death, (for so these might be, if God pleased,) but the nature of them shall be wholly changed, so that they shall not retain the same seeds of mortality: they cannot die any more.

2. Our bodies shall be raised in glory. "Then shall the righteous shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." A resemblance of this we have in the lustre of Moses's face, when he had conversed with God on the mount. His face shone so bright, that the children of Israel were afraid to come near him, till he threw a veil over it. And

that extraordinary majesty of Stephen's face, seemed to be an earnest of his glory. "All that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." How then, if it shone so gloriously even on earth, will it shine in the other world, when his, and the bodies of all the saints, are made like unto Christ's glorious body! How glorious the body of Christ is, we may guess from his transfiguration. St. Peter, when he saw this, when our Lord's face shone as the sun, and his raiment became shining and white as snow, was so transported with joy and admiration, that he knew not what he said. When our Saviour discovered but a little of that glory which he now possesses, and which in due time he will impart to his followers, yet that little of it made the place seem a paradise; and the disciples thought, that they could wish for nothing better than always to live in such pure light, and enjoy so beautiful a sight. "It is good for us to be here: let us make three tabernacles." Here let us fix our abode for ever. And if they thought it so happy only to be present with such heavenly bodies, and to behold them with their eyes, how much happier must it be to dwell in such glorious mansions, and to be themselves clothed with so much brightness!

This excellency of our heavenly bodies, will probably arise in a great measure from the happiness of our souls. The unspeakable joy that we then shall feel, will break through our bodies, and shine forth in our countenances. As the joy of the soul, even in this life, has some influence upon the countenance, by rendering it more open and cheerful: so Solomon tells us, "A man's wisdom makes his face to shine." Virtue, as it refines a man's heart, so it makes his very looks more cheerful and lively.

3. Our bodies shall be raised in power. This expresses the sprightliness of our heavenly bodies, the nimbleness of their motion, by which they shall be obedient and able instruments of the soul. In this state our bodies are no better than clogs and fetters, which confine and restrain the freedom of the soul. The corruptible body presses down the soul, and the earthly tabernacle weighs down the mind. Our dull, sluggish, inactive bodies, are often unable, or backward, to obey the commands of the soul. But in the other life, "they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." Or, as another expresses it, "they shall run to and fro like sparks among the stubble." The speed of their motion, shall be like that of devouring fire in stubble, and the height of it above the towering of an eagle; for they shall meet the Lord in the air, when he comes to judgment, and mount up with him into the highest heaven. This earthly body is slow and heavy in all its motions, listless and soon tired with action. But our heavenly bodies shall be as fire; as active and as nimble as our thoughts are.

4. Our bodies shall be raised spiritual bodies. Our spirits are now forced to serve our bodies, and to attend their leisure, and do greatly depend upon them for most of their actions. But our bodies shall then wholly serve our spirits, and minister to them, and depend upon them. So that, as by a natural body, we understand one fitted for this lower, sensible world, for this earthly state; so a spiritual body is one that is suited to a spiritual state, to an invisible world, to the life of angels. And, indeed,

this is the principal difference between a mortal and a glorified body This flesh is the most dangerous enemy we have: we therefore deny and renounce it in our baptism. It constantly tempts us to evil. Every sense is a snare to us. All its lusts and appetites are inordinate. It is ungovernable, and often rebels against reason. The law in our members wars against the law of our mind. When the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak; so that the best of men are forced to keep it under, and use it hardly, lest it should betray them into folly and misery. And how does it hinder us in all our devotions! How soon does it jade our minds when employed on holy things! How easily by its enchanting pleasures, does it divert them from those noble exercises! But when we have obtained the resurrection unto life, our bodies will be spiritualized, purified, and refined from their earthly grossness; then they will be fit instruments for the soul in all its divine and heavenly employment; we shall not be weary of singing praises to God through infinite ages.

Thus after what little we have been able to conceive of it, it sufficiently appears that a glorified body is infinitely more excellent and desirable than this vile body. The only thing that remains is,

III. To draw some inferences from the whole. And first, From what has been said, we may learn the best way of preparing ourselves to live in those heavenly bodies, which is by cleansing ourselves more and more from all earthly affections, and weaning ourselves from this body and all the pleasures that are peculiar to it. We should begin in this life, to loosen the knot between our souls and this mortal flesh: to refine our affections, and raise them from things below to things above: to take off our thoughts and disengage them from present and sensible things, and accustom ourselves to think of, and converse with, things future and invisible; that so our souls, when they leave this earthly body, may be prepared for a spiritual one, as having beforehand tasted spiritual delights, and being in some degree acquainted with the things which we then shall meet with. A soul wholly taken up with this earthly body is not fit for the glorious mansions above. A sensual mind is so wedded to bodily pleasures, that it cannot enjoy itself without them, and it is not able to relish any other, though infinitely to be preferred before them. Nay, such as follow the inclinations of their fleshly appetites, are so far unfit for heavenly joys, that they would esteem it the greatest unhappiness to be clothed with a spiritual body It would be like clothing a beggar in the robes of a king. Such glorious bodies would be uneasy to them, they would not know what to do in them, they would be glad to retire and put on their rags again. But when we are washed from the guilt of our sins, and cleansed from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, then we shall long to be dissolved, and to be with our exalted Saviour: we shall be always ready to take wing for the other world, where we shall at last have a body suited to our spiritual appetites.

2. From hence we may see how to account for the different degrees of glory in the heavenly world. For although all the children of God shall have glorious bodies, yet the glory of them all shall not be equal. "As one star differeth from another star in glory, so also is the resurrection of the dead." They shall all shine as stars, but those who, by a constant diligence in well doing, have attained to a higher measure of purity than others, shall shine more bright than others. They shall

appear as more glorious stars. It is certain that the most heavenly bodies will be given to the most heavenly souls; so that this is no little encouragement to us to make the greatest progress we possibly can in the knowledge and love of God, since the more we are weaned from the things of the earth now, the more glorious will our bodies be at the resurrection.

3. Let this consideration engage us patiently to bear whatever troubles we may be exercised with in the present life. The time of our eternal redemption draweth nigh. Let us hold out a little longer, and all tears shall be wiped from our eyes, and we shall never sigh nor sorrow any more. And how soon shall we forget all we endured in this earthly tabernacle, when once we are clothed with that house which is from above? We are now but on our journey towards home, and so must expect to struggle with many difficulties; but it will not be long ere we come to our journey's end, and that will make amends for all. We shall then be in a quiet and safe harbour, out of the reach of all storms and dangers. We shall then be at home in our Father's house, no longer exposed to the inconveniences, which, so long as we abide abroad in these tents, we are subject to. And let us not forfeit all this happiness, for want of a little more patience. Only let us hold out to the end, and we shall receive an abundant recompense for all the trouble and uneasiness of our passage, which shall be endless rest and peace.

Let this especially fortify us against the fear of death: it is now disarmed, and can do us no hurt. It divides us indeed from this body awhile, but it is only that we may receive it again more glorious. As God therefore said once to Jacob, "Fear not to go down into Egypt, for I will go down with thee, and will surely bring thee up again;" so I may say to all who are born of God, Fear not to go down into the grave: lay down your heads in the dust; for God will certainly bring you up again, and that in a much more glorious manner. Only "be ye steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord," and then let death prevail over, and pull down, this house of clay; since God hath undertaken to rear it up again, infinitely more beautiful strong and useful.

Sermon CXXXV.—*On Grieving the Holy Spirit.*

Written in the year 1733.

"Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption," Eph. iv, 30.

There can be no point of greater importance to him who knows that it is the Holy Spirit which leads us into all truth and into all holiness, than to consider with what temper of soul we are to entertain his divine presence; so as not either to drive him from us, or to disappoint him of the gracious ends for which his abode with us is designed; which is not the amusement of our understanding, but the conversion and entire sanctification of our hearts and lives.

These words of the apostle contain a most serious and affectionate exhortation to this purpose. "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

The title Holy, applied to the Spirit of God, does not only denote that he is holy in his own nature, but that he makes us so: that he is the great fountain of holiness to his church; the Spirit from whence flows all the grace and virtue, by which the stains of guilt are cleansed, and we are renewed in all holy dispositions, and again bear the image of our Creator. Great reason, therefore, there was for the apostle to give this solemn charge concerning it, and the highest obligation lies upon us all to consider it with the deepest attention: which, that we may the more effectually do, I shall inquire,

I. In what sense the Spirit of God is said to be grieved at the sins of men.

II. By what kind of sin he is more especially grieved.

III. I shall endeavour to show the force of the apostle's argument against grieving the Holy Spirit,—By whom we are sealed to the day of redemption.

I. I am, first, to inquire, in what sense the Spirit of God may be said to be grieved with the sins of men. There is not any thing of what we properly call passion in God. But there is something of an infinitely higher kind. Some motions of his will, which are more strong and vigorous than can be conceived by men: and although they have not the nature of human passions, yet will answer the ends of them. By grief, therefore, we are to understand, a disposition in God's will, flowing at once from his boundless love to the persons of men, and his infinite abhorrence of their sins. And in this restrained sense, it is here applied to the Spirit of God, in the words of the apostle.

And the reasons for which it is peculiarly applied to him are, 1st, Because he is more immediately present with us. 2d, Because our sins are so many contempts of this highest expression of his love, and disappoint the Holy Spirit in his last remedy. And, 3d, Because by this ungrateful dealing we provoke him to withdraw from us.

1. We are said to grieve the Holy Spirit by our sins, because of his immediate presence with us. They are more directly committed under his eye, and are, therefore, more highly offensive to him. He is pleased to look upon professing Christians, as more peculiarly separated to his honour: nay, we are so closely united to him, that we are said to be "one spirit with him;" and, therefore, every sin which we now commit, besides its own proper guilt, carries in it a fresh and infinitely high provocation. "Know ye not your own selves," saith St. Paul, "that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost?" And how are they so, but by his inhabitation and intimate presence with our souls When, therefore, we set up the idols of earthly inclinations in our hearts, (which are properly his altar,) and bow down ourselves to serve those vicious passions, which we ought to sacrifice to his will; this must needs be, in the highest degree, offensive and grievous to him. "For what concord is there between" the Holy Spirit "and Belial? Or what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?"

2. We grieve the Holy Spirit by our sins, because they are so many contempts of the highest expression of his love, and dissappoint him in his last remedy, whereby he is pleased to endeavour our recovery. And thus every sin we now commit is done in despite of all his powerful assistances, in defiance of his reproofs: an ungrateful return for infinite loving kindness

As the Holy Spirit is the immediate minister of God's will upon earth, and transacts all the great affairs of the church of Christ; if while he pours out the riches of his grace upon us, he finds them all unsuccessful, no wonder if he appeals to all the world in the words of the prophet, against our ingratitude: "And now, oh ye men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" These, and many more such, which we meet with in the Holy Scriptures, are the highest expressions of the deepest concern; such as imply the utmost unwillingness to deal severely even with those, whom yet, by all the wise methods of his grace, he could not reform. The Holy Spirit here represents himself as one who would be glad to spare sinners if he could; and therefore we may be sure it is grievous to him that by their sins they will not suffer him.

For men thus to disappoint the Holy Spirit of Love, for that too is his peculiar title, to make him thus wait that he may be gracious, and pay attendance on us through our whole course of folly and vanity, and to stand by, and be a witness of our stubbornness, with the importunate offers of infinite kindness in his hands, is a practice of such a nature, that no gracious mind can bear the thoughts of it. It is an argument of God's unbounded mercy, that he is pleased to express, that he is only grieved at it; that his indignation does not flame out against those who are thus basely ungrateful, and consume them in a moment.

It was such ingratitude as this in the Jews, after numberless experiences of his extraordinary mercies towards them, that made Infinite Love, at last, turn in bitterness to reward them according to their doings, as we find the account given by the prophets in the most affecting and lively manner. And surely, considering the much greater obligations he hath laid on us, who enjoy the highest privileges, we may be sure that our sinful and untoward behaviour will, at last, be as great as the mercies we have abused.

There is no doubt but God observes all the sons of men, and his wrath abides on every worker of iniquity. But it is the unfaithful professor, who has known his pardoning love, that grieves his Holy Spirit; which implies a peculiar baseness in our sins. A man may be provoked indeed by the wrongs of his enemy, but he is properly grieved by the offences of his friend. And, therefore, besides our other obligations, our very near relation to God, as being his friends, and children, would, if we had a spark of gratitude in our souls, be a powerful, restraint upon us, in preserving us from evil.

3. But if arguments of this kind are not strong enough to keep us from grieving our best friend, the Holy Spirit of God, let us consider, that by this ungrateful conduct, we shall provoke him to withdraw from us.

The truth of this, almost all who have ever tasted of the good gifts of the Holy Spirit, must have experienced. It is to be hoped that we have had, some time or other, so lively a sense of his holy influence upon us, as that when we have been so unhappy as to offend him, we could easily perceive the change in our souls, in that darkness, distress, and despondency, which more especially follow the commission of wilful and presumptuous sins. At those seasons the blessed Spirit retired and

concealed his presence from us, we were justly left to a sense of our own wretchedness and misery, till we humbled ourselves before the Lord, and, by deep repentance, and active faith, obtained a return of divine mercy and peace.

And the more frequently we offend him, the more we weaken his influences in our souls. For frequent breaches will necessarily occasion estrangement between us; and it is impossible that our intercourse with him can be cordial, when it is disturbed by repeated interruptions. So a man will forgive his friend a great many imprudences, and some wilful transgressions; but to find him frequently affronting him, all his kindness will wear off by degrees; and the warmth of his affection, even towards him who had the greatest share of it, will die away; as he cannot but think that such a one does not any longer either desire or deserve to maintain a friendship with him.

II. I come now to consider by what kinds of sin the Holy Spirit is more especially grieved. These sins are, in general, such as either at first wholly disappoint his grace of its due effect upon our souls, or are afterwards directly contrary to his gracious and merciful assistances. Of the former sort I shall only mention, at present, inconsiderateness: of the latter, sins of presumption.

The first I shall mention, as being more especially grievous to the Holy Spirit, is inconsiderateness and inadvertence to his holy motions within us. There is a particular frame and temper of soul, a sobriety of mind, without which the Spirit of God will not concur in the purifying of our hearts. It is in our power, through his preventing and assisting grace, to prepare this in ourselves, and he expects we should, this being the foundation of all his after works. Now this consists in preserving our minds in a cool and serious disposition, in regulating and calming our affections, and calling in and checking the inordinate pursuits of our passions after the vanities and pleasures of this world. The doing of which is of such importance, that the very reason why men profit so little under the most powerful means, is, that they do not look enough within themselves; they do not observe and watch the discords and imperfections of their own spirits, nor attend with care to the directions and remedies which the Holy Spirit is always ready to suggest. Men are generally lost in the hurry of life, in the business or pleasures of it, and seem to think that their regeneration, their new nature, will spring and grow up within them, with as little care and thought of their own as their bodies were conceived, and have attained their full strength and stature: whereas, there is nothing more certain, than that the Holy Spirit will not purify our nature, unless we carefully attend to his motions, which are lost upon us, while, in the prophet's language, we "scatter away our time;" while we squander away our thoughts upon unnecessary things, and leave our spiritual improvement, the one thing needful, quite unthought of and neglected.

There are many persons, who, in the main of their lives are regular in their conversation, and observe the means of improvement, and attend upon the holy sacrament with exactness, who yet, in the intervals of their duties, give too great liberty to their thoughts, affections, and discourse: they seem to adjourn the great business of salvation to the next hour of devotion. If these professors lose so much in their spiritual estate for want of adjusting and balancing their accounts, what

then must we think of those who scarce ever bestow a serious thought upon their eternal welfare? Surely there is not any temper of mind less a friend to the spirit of religion, than a thoughtless inconsiderate one, that by a natural succession of strong and vain affections, shuts out every thing useful from their souls, till at length they are overtaken by a fatal lethargy; they lose sight of all danger, and become insensible of divine convictions; and, in consequence, quite disappoint all the blessed means of restoration. If, therefore, we measure the Holy Spirit's concern at the sins of men by the degrees of his disappointment, we may conclude, that there is no state of mind that grieves him more, unless that of actual wickedness.

Presumptuous sins are, indeed, in the highest manner offensive to the Holy Spirit of God. They are instances of open enmity against him, and have all the guilt of open rebellion. The wilful sinner is not ignorant or surprised, but knowingly fights against God's express commandment, and the lively, full, and present conviction of his own mind and conscience; so that this is the very standard of iniquity. And all other kinds of sins are more or less heinous, as they are nearer or farther off from sins of this dreadful nature; in as much as these imply the greatest opposition to God's will, contempt of his mercy, and defiance of his justice. This, if any thing can, doubtless must so grieve him, as to make him wholly withdraw his gracious presence.

III. I come now to show the force of the apostle's argument against grieving the Holy Spirit: because "we are sealed to the day of redemption."

By the day of redemption, may be meant, either the time of our leaving these bodies at death, or, of our taking them again at the general resurrection. Though here it probably means the latter; in which sense the apostle uses the word in another place: "Waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our bodies." And to this day of redemption we are sealed by the Holy Spirit these three ways:

1. By receiving his real stamp upon our souls; by being made the partakers of the divine nature.

2. By receiving him as a mark of God's property; as a sign that we belong to Christ. And,

3. As an earnest and assurance to our own spirits, that we have a title to eternal happiness.

And, first: We are sealed by the Holy Spirit of God, by our receiving his real stamp upon our souls: being made the partakers of the divine nature, and "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." This is, indeed, the design of his dwelling in us, to heal our disordered souls, and to restore that image of his upon our nature, which is so defaced by our original and actual corruptions. And until our spirits are, in some measure, thus renewed, we can have no communion with him. For "if we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." But by the renewal of our minds in the image of him that created us, we are still more capable of his influences; and by means of a daily intercourse with him, we are more and more transformed into his likeness, till we are satisfied with it.

This likeness to God, this conformity of our will and affections to his will, is, properly speaking, holiness; and to produce this in us, is the proper end and design of all the influences of the Holy Spirit. By

means of his presence with us, we receive from him a greater fulness of holy virtues: we take such features of resemblance in our spirits as correspond to his original perfections. And thus we are sealed by him, in the first sense, by way of preparation for our day of redemption.

And since we are so, and our new nature thus grows up under the same power of his hands, what do we, when we grieve him by our sins, but undo and destroy his work; we frustrate his designs by breaking down the fences which he had been trying to raise against the over flowings of corruption: so that, at last, we entirely defeat all his gracious measures for our salvation.

2. We are sealed by the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption, as a sign of God's property in us, and as a mark that we belong to Christ. And this is, by his appointment, the condition and security of that future happiness into which he will admit none but those who have received the Spirit of his Son into their hearts. But in whomsoever he finds this mark and character, when he shall come to judge the world, these will he take to himself, and will not suffer the destroyer to hurt them. To this very purpose, the prophet Malachi, speaking of those who feared God, says, "They shall be mine, saith the Lord, in the day when I make up my jewels;"—that is to say, when I set my seal and mark upon them;—"and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."

Now if the Holy Spirit be the sign, the seal, and the security of our salvation, then by grieving him by our sins, we break up his seal with our own hands, we cancel our firmest security, and as much as in us lies, reverse our own title to eternal life.

Besides this, the Holy Spirit within us, is the security of our salvation; he is likewise an earnest of it, and assures our spirits that we have a title to eternal happiness. "The Spirit of God beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God." And in order that this inward testimony may be lively and permanent, it is absolutely necessary to attend carefully to the secret operation of the Holy Spirit within us; who by infusing his holy consolations into our souls, by enlivening our drooping spirits, and giving us a quick relish of his promises, raises bright and joyous sensations in us; and gives a man beforehand, a taste of the bliss to which he is going. In this sense, God is said, by the apostle to the Corinthians, to have "sealed us, and to have given the earnest of his Spirit in our hearts;" and that earnest, not only by way of confirmation of our title to happiness, but as an actual part of that reward at present, the fulness of which we expect hereafter.

SERMON CXXXVI.—*On Love*

Preached at Savannah, February 20, 1736.

"Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing," 1 Cor. xiii, 3.

THERE is great reason to fear, that it will hereafter be said of most of you who are here present, that this Scripture, as well as all those you have heard before, profited you nothing. Some perhaps are not serious

enough to attend to it; some who do attend will not believe it; some who do believe it, will yet think it a hard saying, and so forget it as soon as they can; and of those few who receive it gladly for a time, some, having no root of humility, or self denial, when persecution ariseth because of the word, will, rather than suffer for it, fall away. Nay, even of those who attend to it, who believe, remember, yea, and receive it so deeply into their hearts, that it both takes root there, endures the heat of temptation, and begins to bring forth fruit, yet will not *all* bring forth fruit unto perfection. The cares or pleasures of the world, and the desire of other things, (perhaps not felt till then,) will grow up with the word and choke it.

Nor am I that speak the word of God, any more secure from these dangers, than you that hear it. I too have to bewail "an evil heart of unbelief." And whenever God shall suffer persecution to arise, yea, were it only the slight one of reproach, I may be the first that is offended. Or if I be enabled to sustain this, yet should he let loose the cares of the world upon me, or should he cease to guard me against those pleasures that do not lead to him, and the desire of other things, I should surely be overwhelmed, and having preached to others be myself a cast away.

Why then do I speak this word at all? Why? Because a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me: and though what I shall do to morrow, I know not, to day I will preach the gospel. And with regard to you, my commission runs thus: "Son of man, I do send thee to them; and thou shalt say unto them, thus saith the Lord God;—whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear."

Thus saith the Lord God, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." (In order to this, "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.") "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is."—"In secret, likewise, pray to thy Father who seeth in secret," and "pour out thy heart before him."—Make my word "a lantern to thy feet, and a light unto thy paths."—"Keep it in thy heart, and in thy mouth, when thou sittest in thy house, when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."—"Turn unto me with fasting," as well as prayer: and, in obedience to thy dying Redeemer, by eating that bread, and drinking that cup, "show ye forth the Lord's death till he come." By the power thou shalt through these means receive from on high, do all the things which are enjoined in the Law; and avoid all those things which are forbidden therein, knowing, "that if ye offend in one point, ye are guilty of all." "To do good also, and to distribute, forget not:—Yea, while you have time, do all the good you can unto all men." Then, "deny thyself, take up thy cross daily:" and, if called thereto, "resist unto blood." And when each of you can say, "All this have I done;" then let him say to himself farther, (words at which not only such as Felix alone, but the holiest soul upon earth might tremble,) "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing."

It concerns us all, therefore, in the highest degree, to know,

I. The full sense of these words, "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned;"

II. The true meaning of the word love: and,

III. In what sense it can be said, "That without love all this profit eth us nothing."

I. As to the first: It must be observed, that the word used by St. Paul, properly signifies, *To divide into small pieces, and then to distribute what has been so divided:* and consequently it implies, not only divesting ourselves at once of all the worldly goods we enjoy, either from a fit of distaste to the world, or a sudden start of devotion, but an act of choice, and that choice coolly and steadily executed. It may imply too, that this be done not out of vanity, but in part from a right principle; namely, from a design to perform the command of God, and a desire to obtain his kingdom. It must be farther observed, that the word *give*, signifies actually to deliver a thing according to agreement, and accordingly it implies, like the word preceding, not a hasty, inconsiderate action, but one performed with opened eyes and a determined heart, pursuant to a resolution before taken. The full sense of the words, therefore, is this, which he that hath ears to hear, let him hear: Though I should give all the substance of my house to feed the poor; though I should do so upon mature choice and deliberation; though I should spend my life in dealing it out to them with my own hands, yea, and that from a principle of obedience; though I should suffer, from the same view, not only reproach and shame, not only bonds and imprisonment, and all this by my own continued act and deed, not accepting deliverance, but moreover, death itself,—yea, death inflicted in a manner the most terrible to nature; yet all this, if I have not love, ("the love of God, and the love of all mankind shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Ghost given unto me,") it profiteth me nothing.

II. Let us inquire what this love is: What is the true meaning of the word. We may consider it, either as to its properties, or effects. And that we may be under no possibility of mistake, we will not at all regard the judgment of men, but go to our Lord himself for an account of the nature of love; and for the effects of it, to his inspired apostle.

The love which our Lord requires in all his followers is, the love of God and man;—of God, for his own, and of man, for God's sake. Now what is it to love God, but to delight in him, to rejoice in his will, to desire continually to please him, to seek and find our happiness in him, and to thirst day and night for a fuller enjoyment of him?

As to the measure of this love, our Lord hath clearly told us, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." Not that we are to love or delight in none but him. For he hath commanded us not only to love our neighbour, that is, all men, as ourselves,—to desire and pursue their happiness as sincerely and steadily as our own,—but also to love many of his creatures in the strictest sense; to delight in them, to enjoy them: only in such a manner and measure as we know and feel, not to indispose but to prepare us for the enjoyment of him. Thus then we are called to love God with all our heart.

The effects, or properties of this love, the apostle describes in the chapter before us. And all these being infallible marks whereby any man may judge of himself, whether he hath this love or hath it not, they deserve our deepest consideration.

"Love suffereth long," or is long suffering. If thou love thy neighbour for God's sake, thou wilt bear long with his infirmities. If he want wisdom, thou wilt pity and not despise him. If he be in error,

thou wilt mildly endeavour to recover him, without any sharpness or reproach. If he be overtaken in a fault, thou wilt labour to restore him in the spirit of meekness: and if haply that cannot be done soon, thou wilt have patience with him; if God, peradventure, may bring him at length to the knowledge and love of the truth. In all provocations, either from the weakness or malice of men, thou wilt show thyself a pattern of gentleness and meekness; and be they ever so often repeated, wilt not be overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. Let no man deceive you with vain words: he who is not thus long suffering, hath not love.

Again: "Love is kind." Whosoever feels the love of God and man shed abroad in his heart, feels an ardent and uninterrupted thirst after the happiness of all his fellow creatures. His soul melts away with the very fervent desire, which he hath continually to promote it; and out of the abundance of the heart, his mouth speaketh. In his tongue is the law of kindness. The same is impressed on all his actions. The flame within is continually working itself a way, and spreading abroad more and more, in every instance of good will to all with whom he hath to do. So that whether he thinks or speaks, or whatever he does, it all points to the same end: the advancing, by every possible way, the happiness of all his fellow creatures. Deceive not, therefore, your own souls: he who is not thus kind, hath not love.

Farther: "Love envieth not." This, indeed, is implied, when it is said, "love is kind." For kindness and envy are inconsistent: they can no more abide together than light and darkness. If we earnestly desire *all* happiness to *all*, we cannot be grieved at the happiness of any. The fulfilling of our desire will be sweet to our soul; so far shall we be from being pained at it. If we are always doing what good we can to our neighbour, and wishing we could do more, it is impossible that we should repine at any good he receives; indeed, it will be the very joy of our heart. However then we may flatter ourselves, or one another, he that envieth hath not love.

It follows, "Love vaunteth not itself;" or rather, is not rash, or hasty in judging: for this is indeed, the true meaning of the word. As many as love their neighbour for God's sake, will not easily receive an ill opinion of any to whom they wish all good, spiritual as well as temporal. They cannot condemn him even in their hearts without evidence: nor upon slight evidence neither. Nor, indeed, upon any, without first, if it be possible, having him and his accuser face to face; or, at the least, acquainting him with the accusation, and letting him speak for himself. Every one of you feels that he cannot but act thus, with regard to one whom he tenderly loves. Why, then, he who does not act thus, hath not love.

I only mention one thing more of the effects or properties of this love: "Love is not puffed up." You cannot wrong one you love. Therefore, if you love God with all your heart, you cannot so wrong him, as to rob him of his glory, by taking to yourself what is due to him only. You will own that all you are, and all you have, is his; that without him you can do nothing; that he is your light and your life, your strength and your all; and that you are nothing yea, less than nothing before him. And if you love your neighbour as yourself, you will not be able to prefer yourself before him. Nay, you will not be able to de

spise any one any more than to hate him. As the wax melteth before the fire, so doth pride melt away before love. All haughtiness, whether of heart, speech, or behaviour, vanishes away where love prevails. It bringeth down the high looks of him who boasted in his strength, and maketh him as a little child: diffident of himself, willing to hear, glad to learn, easily convinced, easily persuaded. And whosoever is otherwise minded, let him give up all vain hope: he is puffed up, and so hath not love.

III. It remains to inquire in what sense it can be said, "That though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, yea, though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing."

The chief sense of the words is, doubtless, this: that whatsoever we do, and whatsoever we suffer, if we are not renewed in the spirit of our mind, by "the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost given unto us," we cannot enter into life eternal. None can enter there, unless in virtue of the covenant which God hath given unto man in the Son of his love.

But because general truths are less apt to affect us, let us consider one or two particulars, with regard to which all we can do or suffer, if we have not love, profiteth us nothing. And first, all without this profiteth not, so as to make life happy; nor, secondly, so as to make death comfortable.

And, first: Without love, nothing can so profit us as to make our lives happy. By happiness, I mean, not a slight, trifling pleasure, that perhaps begins and ends in the same hour; but such a state of well being, as contents the soul, and gives it a steady, lasting satisfaction. But that nothing without love can profit us, as to our present happiness, will appear from this single consideration: you cannot want it in any one single instance without pain, and the more you depart from it the pain is the greater. Are you wanting in long suffering? Then so far as you fall short of this, you fall short of happiness. The more the opposite tempers, anger, fretfulness, revenge, prevail, the more unhappy you are. You know it; you feel it; nor can the storm be allayed, or peace ever return to your soul, unless meekness, gentleness, patience, or, in one word, love, take possession of it. Does any man find in himself ill will, malice, envy, or any other temper opposite to kindness? Then is misery there: and the stronger the temper, the more miserable he is. If the slothful man may be said to eat his own flesh, much more the malicious, or envious. His soul is the very type of hell; full of torment as well as wickedness. He hath already the worm that never dieth, and he is hastening to the fire that never can be quenched. Only as yet the great gulf is not fixed between him and heaven. As yet there is a Spirit ready to help his infirmities; who is still willing, if he stretch out his hands to heaven and bewail his ignorance and misery, to purify his heart from vile affections, and to renew it in the love of God, and so lead him by present, up to eternal happiness.

Secondly: Without love, nothing can make death comfortable. By comfortable, I do not mean stupid, or senseless. I would not say, he died comfortably, who died of an apoplexy, or by the shot of a cannon; any more than he who, having his conscience seared, died as unconcerned as the beasts that perish. Neither do I believe that you would envy any one the comfort of dying raving mad. But by a comfortable

death, I mean, a calm passage out of life, full of even, rational peace and joy. And such a death, all the acting, and all the suffering in the world, cannot give, without love.

To make this still more evident, I cannot appeal to your own experience; but I may to what we have seen, and to the experience of others And two I have myself seen going out of this life in what I call a comfortable manner; though not with equal comfort. One had evidently more comfort than the other, because he had more love.

I attended the first, during a great part of his last trial, as well as when he yielded up his soul to God. He cried out "God doth chasten me with strong pain; but I thank him for all; I bless him for all; I love him for all!" When asked, not long before his release, "Are the consolations of God small with you?" He replied aloud, "No, no, no!" Calling all that were near him by their names, he said, "Think of heaven, talk of heaven: all the time is lost when we are not thinking of heaven." Now this was the voice of love. And so far as that prevailed, all was comfort, peace, and joy. But as his love was not perfect, so neither was his comfort. He had intervals of fretfulness, and therein of misery. Giving by both an incontestable proof, that love can sweeten both life and death. So when that is either absent from, or obscured in the soul, there is no peace or comfort there.

It was in this place, that I saw the other good soldier of Jesus Christ grappling with his last enemy death. And it was, indeed, a spectacle worthy to be seen of God, and angels, and men. Some of his last breath was spent in a psalm of praise, to Him who was then giving him the victory; in assurance whereof he began the triumph, even in the heat of the battle. When he was asked, "Hast thou the love of God in thy heart?" he lifted up his eyes and hands, and answered, "Yes, yes;' with all the strength he had left. To one who inquired, If he was afraid of the devil, whom he had just mentioned as making his last attack upon him, he replied, "No, no: my loving Saviour hath conquered every enemy: he is with me; I fear nothing." Soon after, he said, "The way to my loving Saviour is sharp, but it is short." Nor was it long before he fell into a sort of slumber, wherein his soul sweetly returned to God that gave it.

Here, we may observe, was no mixture of any passion or temper contrary to love; therefore, there was no misery: perfect love casting out whatever might have occasioned torment. And whosoever thou art, that hast the like measure of love, thy last end shall be like his

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Sermon CXXXVII.—*On Public Diversions.*

"Shall the trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? Shall there be evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it?" Amos iii, 6.

It is well if there are not too many here, who are nearly concerned in these words of the prophet; the plain sense of which seems to be this: Are there any men in the world so stupid and senseless, so utterly void of common reason, so careless of their own and their neighbours' safety or destruction, as when an alarm of approaching judgments is given, to show no signs of apprehension? To take no care in order to prevent them, but go on as securely as if no alarm had been given?

Do not all men know, that whatsoever evil befalls them, it befalls them either by God's permission, or by his appointment? And that he designs every evil of this life to warn men to avoid still greater evils? That he suffers these lighter marks of his displeasure to awaken mankind, so that they may shun his everlasting vengeance, and be timely advised by feeling a part of it, so to change their ways, that his whole displeasure may not arise?

I intend, speaking on this subject, to show, first, That there is no evil in any place, but the hand of the Lord is in it.

Secondly, That every uncommon evil is the trumpet of God, blown in that place, so that the people may take warning.

Thirdly, To consider, whether, after God hath blown his trumpet in this place, we have been duly afraid.

I am first to show, in few words, that there is no evil in any place but the hand of the Lord is therein. No evil, that is, no affliction or calamity, whether of a public or of a private nature, whether it concerns only one or a few persons, or reaches to many, or to all of that place where it comes. Whatever circumstance occasions loss or pain to any man, or number of men, may in that respect be called an evil; and of such evils the prophet speaks in these words.

Of such evils, we are to believe, that they never happen but by the knowledge and permission of God. And of every such evil we may say, that the Lord hath done it, either by his own immediate power, by the strength of his own right hand, or by commanding, or else suffering it to be done, by those his servants that do his pleasure. For the Lord is King, be the people never so impatient: yea, the Great King of all the earth. Whatsoever, therefore, is done in all the earth, (sin only excepted,) he doeth it himself. The Lord God omnipotent still reigneth; and all things are so subject unto him, that his will must be done, whether we agree to it or not; as in heaven, so also upon earth. Not only his blessed angels, but all things serve him in all places of his dominion: those wicked spirits which rule the darkness of this world, and those men who are like them, he rules by constraint. The senseless and brute parts of the creation, by nature; and those men who are like God by choice. But however it be, with or without their own choice, they all act in obedience to his will; and particularly so, when in judgment, he still remembers mercy, and permits a smaller evil, that he may prevent a greater. Then, at least, we are to acknowledge the hand of God in whatsoever instruments he makes use of. It makes little difference, whether he executes his purpose by the powers of heaven or hell, or by the mistakes, carelessness, or malice of men. If a destroying angel marches forth against a town or a country, it is God who empowers him to destroy. If bad men distress one or more of their fellow creatures, the ungodly are a sword of his. If fire, hail, wind, or storm, be let loose upon the earth, yet they only fulfil his word. So certain it is, that there is no evil in any place which the Lord, in this sense, hath not done.

I am to prove, secondly, That every uncommon evil is the trumpet of God, blown in that place where it comes, that the people may take warning.

Every private affliction is doubtless the voice of God, whereby he calls upon that person to flee to him for succour. But if any extraordinary affliction occurs, especially when many persons are concerned

in it, we may not only say, that in this God speaks to us, but that the God of glory thundereth. This voice of the Lord is in power! This voice of the Lord is full of majesty! This demands the deepest attention of all to whom it comes. This loudly claims the most serious consideration; not only of those to whom it is peculiarly sent, but of all those who are round about them. This, like a voice from heaven, commands, that all people should be afraid, should tremble at the presence of God! That every one should feel and show that religious fear, that sacred awe of the majesty of God, which is both the beginning and perfection of wisdom. That fear which should make them haste to do whatsoever the Lord their God commands them, and careful not to turn aside from it to the right hand or the left.

It is needless to use many words to prove this, after what has been proved already. For if there be no evil in any place which the Lord hath not done, and if he doth not willingly send evil on any place, but only to warn them to avoid greater evils; then it is plain, that wherever any evil is, it is the trumpet of God blown in that place, to the end that the people may be so afraid, as not to continue in any thing which displeaseth him. Then it is plain, that in every such merciful evil, God speaks to this effect: "Oh that there were such a heart in this people, that they would fear me, and keep my commandments always; that it might be well with them and their children after them!"

Thirdly: What signs we have manifested of this wise and grateful fear, I am now to consider more at large.

First, Let us consider how God hath blown his trumpet in this place; and, secondly, whether we have been duly afraid.

Let us consider, first, how God hath blown his trumpet among us in this place. And that it might never be forgotten, it were much to be wished, not only that parents would tell their children, to the intent that their posterity might know it, and the children that are yet unborn: but also, that it were written in our public register, for a standing memorial to all generations; that in the very week, and on the very day when that diversion which hath had a considerable share in turning the Christian world upside down, was to have been brought in hither also such a fire broke out, as neither we nor our fathers had seen in this place: a fire, which soon spread itself not over one only, but over several dwelling houses; which so went forth in the fury of its strength that it soon prevailed over the weak resistance made against it, and left only so much standing of most of those buildings over which it prevailed, as might serve to quicken our remembrance of it. Let it be told, that those who came prepared for another prospect, were entertained with *that* of devouring flames! A prospect which continued during the whole time of the intended diversion, and which was but too plainly to be seen, together with the fiery pillars of smoke, which increased its horror, from the very place which had been pitched upon for the scene of this diversion.

This is the bare matter of fact. And even from this, let any one in whom is the spirit of a man, judge, whether the trumpet of God hath not sufficiently sounded among us of this place! And doth this trumpet give an uncertain sound? How would you have God speak more plainly? Do you desire that the Lord should also thunder out of heaven, and give hail stones and coals of fire? Nay, rather let us say, "It is enough!

speak no more, Lord, for thy servants hear! Those to whom thou hast most severely spoken, are afraid, and do seek thee with their whole heart. They resolve not to prolong the time, but even *now*, by thy gracious assistance, to look well if there be any way of wickedness in them, and to turn their feet unto the way everlasting; to renounce every thing that is evil in thy sight; yea, the sin that doth the most easily beset them; and to use their whole diligence for the time to come, to make their calling and election sure. Those to whom thou hast spoken by the misfortune of their neighbours, are likewise afraid at thy tokens, and own that it was thy mere goodness, that they too and their substance were not consumed. They likewise firmly purpose in themselves to make the true use of thy merciful warning; to labour more and more, day by day, to purge themselves from all sin, from every earthly affection, that they may be fit to stand in the presence of that God, who is himself "a consuming fire!"

But have we indeed been thus duly afraid? This is now to be considered. And because we cannot see the hearts of others, let us form our judgment from their actions, which will be the best done by a plain relation, of which every one that hears it can easily tell whether it be true or false.

In the day following that on which the voice of God had so dreadfully commanded us to exchange our mirth for sadness, the diversion which that had broken off, was as eagerly begun anew: crowds of people flocked out of that very town where the destruction had been wrought the day before; and rushed by the place of desolation, to the place of entertainment! Here you may see the ground covered with heaps of ruins, mingled with yet unquenched fire. A little way off, as thickly covered with horses and men, pressing on to see another new sight. On this side were the mourners bewailing the loss of their goods, and the necessities of their families. On the other, the feasters delighting themselves with the sport they had gained. Surely, such a mixture of mirth and sadness, of feasting and mourning, of laughing and weeping, hath not been seen from the day in which our forefathers first came up into this land, until yesterday.

Such is the fear we have shown of the wrath of God! Thus have we been afraid after he had blown his trumpet among us! These are the signs we have given of our resolution to avoid whatever is displeasing in his sight! Hereby we have proved how we design to avoid that diversion in particular, which he hath given us so terrible a reason to believe is far from being pleasing to him! Not that this is the only reason we have to believe so. Besides this last melancholy argument against it, we have so many others, as any serious Christian would find it a hard task to answer. But I have only time to mention slightly a few of the consequences that were never yet separated from it.

Before I mention these, it is not necessary for me to say, whether the diversion is sinful in itself, simply considered, or not. If any one can find a race which has none of those consequences, let him go to it in the name of God. Only till he finds one which does not give occasion to these or the like villanies, let him who nameth the name of Christ have a care of any way encouraging them.

One thing more I would have observed, that it is so far from being uncharitable to warn well meaning people of the tendency of these diver-

sions, that the more clearly and strongly any one represents it to them, the more charitable to them he is. This may be made plain by a very easy comparison. You see the wine when it sparkles in the cup and are going to drink of it, I tell you, there is poison in it! and, therefore, beg you to throw it away. You answer, the wine is harmless in itself: I reply, perhaps it is so; but still, if it be mixed with what is not harmless, no one in his senses, if he knows it, at least, unless he could separate the good from the bad, will once think of drinking it. If you add, it is not poison to me, though it be to others. Then I say, throw it away for thy brother's sake, lest thou embolden him to drink also. Why should thy strength occasion thy weak brother to perish for whom Christ died? Now let any one judge which is the uncharitable person. he who pleads against the wine or the diversion, for his brother's sake, or he who pleads against the life of his brother, for the sake of the wine or the diversions.

All the doubt there can be is this: is there poison in this diversion which is supposed to be harmless in itself. To clear this up, let us, first, observe, the notorious lying that is always joined with it; the various kinds of overreaching and cheating; the horrid oaths and curses that constantly accompany it, wherewith the name of our Lord God, blessed for ever, is blasphemed. When or where was this diversion ever known without these dreadful consequences? Who was ever one day present at one of these entertainments, without being himself a witness to some of these? And surely these alone, had we no other ill consequences to charge upon this diversion, are enough, till a way is found to purge it from them, to make both God and all wise men to abhor it.

But over and above these, we charge it secondly, with affording the fairest means to exercise and to increase covetousness. This is done by the occasion it gives to all, who please, to lay wagers with one another; which commonly brings so strong a desire of possessing what is another's, as will hardly cease when that one point is decided; but will be exceeding likely to leave such a thirst in the mind, as not all the winning in the world will satisfy. And what amends can the trifling sport of a thousand people make, for one soul thus corrupted and ruined? Therefore, on this account too, till a way is known to secure all that frequent it from this danger, well may this sport itself be an abomination to him who values one soul more than the whole world.

May we not well fear that it is an abomination to the Lord, because of a third effect of it? Because it is so apt to inflame those passions which he so earnestly commands us to quench? Because many people are so heated on such occasions, as they never ought to be on any occasion. Supposing it possible that a man might be angry and not sin; yet hardly upon such occasions, or in such a degree as those who are angry on such occasions commonly are. This consequence too, let him separate from such a diversion, who would prevent its being displeasing to God.

Till this be done, let no one say, What harm is there in a horse race? But if any should still ask that question, we can answer yet more particularly, Are you a young person who desire to go to it? Then it is likely you go either to see or to be seen; to admire other fine sights or to be admired yourself. The hurt of this is, it nourishes that friend

ship which is enmity with God. It strengthens those affections which are already too strong: the desire of the eye, and the pride of life. All such diversions as these are the noblest instruments the devil has, to fill the mind with earthly, sensual, and devilish passions; to make you of a light and trifling spirit: in a word, to make you a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God. Are you, who desire to go to it, advanced in years, and, therefore, less subject to such temptations? Take heed that your hearts deceive you not. But be it as you suppose, hath it not done you hurt enough, if it has hindered any of you from partaking of the blessed sacrament? If by preventing either that serious examination, or that private devotion which you wisely use before you come to it, it has occasioned your neglecting to come to this holy table; and so not only disobeying a plain command of God, but likewise losing all those inestimable advantages which are there reached out to them who obey him. Are you a rich man that desire to go? Then you have probably given something towards it. That is, you have thrown away that seed, which might have borne fruit to eternity! You have thrown away a part of that talent, which, had you rightly improved, you might have been an everlasting gainer by it! You have utterly lost, what God himself, had you lent it to him, would richly have repaid you: for you have given to those who neither need, nor perhaps thank you for it; which, if you had bestowed upon your helpless brethren, your blessed Redeemer would have esteemed it as done unto himself, and would have treated you accordingly at the great day. Are you a poor man, who have gone or given any thing to this diversion? Then it has done you most hurt of all. It has made you throw away for an idle sport abroad, what your wife and family wanted at home. If so, you have denied the faith, and are far worse than an infidel. But suppose it cost you no money, was it not hurt enough, if it cost you any of your time? What had you to do to run after trifling diversions, when you ought to have been employed in honest labour? Surely if the rich think, that God hath given them more than they want, (though it will be well if they do not one day think otherwise,) yet *you* have no temptation to think so. Sufficient for your day is the labour thereof.

I have but a few words to add,—and those I speak not to them who are unwilling to hear, whose affections are set upon this world, and therefore their eyes are blinded by it; but I speak to them in whom is an understanding heart, and a discerning spirit;—who, if they have formerly erred, are now resolved, by the grace of God, to return no more to the error of their ways; but for the time to come, not only to avoid, but also earnestly to oppose whatsoever is contrary to the will of God. To these I say, Are you young? So much the rather scorn all employments that are useless, but much more if they are sinful. For you are they, whose wisdom and glory it is "to remember your Creator in the days of your youth." Are you elder? So much the rather bestow all the time which you can spare from the necessary business of this life, in preparing yourself, and those about you, for their entrance into a better life: for your day is far spent, and your night is at hand Redeem, therefore, the little time you have left. Are you rich? Then you have particular reason to labour that you may be rich in good works. For you are they to whom much is given, not to throw away, but to use well and wisely; and of you much shall be required. Are you poor?

Then you have particular reason to work with your hands, that you may provide for your own household. Nor when you have done this have you done all; for then you are to labour that you may give to him that needeth: not to him that needeth diversions, but to him that needeth the necessaries of nature; that needeth clothes to cover him, food to support his life, or a house where to lay his head.

What remains, but that we labour, one and all, young and old, rich and poor, to wipe off the past scandal from our town and people. First, by oppocing to the utmost, for the time to come, by word and deed, among our friends, and all we have to do with, this unhappy diversion, which has such terribly hurtful consequences. By doing all we possibly can to hinder its coming among us any more. And, secondly, by showing all the mercy we can to our afflicted neighbours, according as God hath prospered us, and by this timely relief of them, laying up for ourselves a good foundation against the day of necessity. Thirdly, by our constant attendance on God's public service, and blessed sacrament, and our watchful, charitable, and pious life. Thus giving the noblest proof before men and angels, that although even after we were troubled, we went wrong, yet upon more deeply considering how God hath blown his trumpet among us, we were afraid. We then shall say, with an awakened heart, Behold, the Lord our God hath showed us his glory and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire. Now, therefore, while time is, let us put away far from us every accursed thing; "for if we hear this voice of the Lord our God any more, then we shall die."

SERMON CXXXVIII.—*On the Holy Spirit.*

Preached at St. Mary's, Oxford, on Whitsunday, 1736.

"Now the Lord is that Spirit," 2 Cor. iii, 17.

THE apostle had been showing, how the gospel ministry was superior to that of the law: the time being now come when types and shadows should be laid aside, and we should be invited to our duty by the manly and ingenuous motives of a clear and full revelation, open and free on God's part, and not at all disguised by his ambassadors. But what he chiefly insists upon, is not the *manner*, but the *subject* of their ministry: "Who hath made us able ministers," saith he, "of the New Testament: not of the letter, but of the Spirit: for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life." Here lies the great difference between the two dispensations: that the law was indeed *spiritual* in its demands requiring a life consecrated to God in the observance of many rules: but not conveying spiritual assistance, its effect was only to kill and mortify man; by giving him to understand, that he must needs be in a state of great depravity, since he found it so difficult to obey God; and that, as particular deaths were by that institution inflicted for particular sins, so death, in general, was but the consequence of his universal sinfulness. But the ministration of the New Testament was that of a "Spirit which giveth life:" a Spirit not only promised, but actually conferred; which should both enable Christians now to live unto God,

and fulfil precepts even more spiritual than the former, and restore them hereafter to perfect life, after the ruins of sin and death. The incarnation, preaching, and death of Jesus Christ, were designed to represent, proclaim, and purchase for us this gift of the Spirit; and, therefore, says the apostle, "The Lord is that Spirit," or *the* Spirit.

This description of Christ was a proper inducement to Jews to believe on him; and it is still a necessary instruction to Christians, to regulate their expectations from him. But I think this age has made it particularly necessary to be well assured, what Christ is to us? When that question is so differently resolved by the pious but weak accounts of some pretenders to *faith* on one hand, and by the clearer but not perfectly Christian accounts of some pretenders to *reason* on the other: while some derive from him a "righteousness of God," but in a sense somewhat improper and figurative; and others, no more than a charter of pardon, and a system of morality: while some so interpret the gospel, as to place the holiness they are to be saved by, in something divine, but exterior to themselves; and others, so as to place it in things really within themselves, but not more than human. Now the proper cure of what indistinctness there is one way, and what infidelity in the other, seems to be contained in the doctrine of my text: "The Lord is that Spirit."

In treating of which words, I will consider,

I. The nature of our fall in Adam: by which it will appear, that if "the Lord" were not "that Spirit," he could not be said to save or redeem us from our fallen condition.

II. I will consider the person of Jesus Christ: by which it will appear, that "the Lord is that Spirit." And,

III. I will inquire into the nature and operations of the Holy Spirit, as bestowed upon Christians.

I. I am to consider the nature of our fall in Adam.

Our first parents did enjoy the presence of the Holy Spirit; for they were created in the image and likeness of God, which was no other than his Spirit. By that he communicates himself to his creatures, and by that alone they can bear any likeness to him. It is, indeed, his life in them; and so properly divine, that upon this ground, angels and regenerate men are called his children.

But when man would not be guided by the Holy Spirit, it left him. When he would be wise in his own way, and in his own strength, and did not depend in simplicity upon his heavenly Father, the seed of a superior life was recalled from him. For he was no longer fit to be formed into a heavenly condition, when he had so unworthy a longing for, or rather dependance upon, an earthly fruit, which he knew God would not bless to him; no longer fit to receive supernatural succours, when he could not be content with his happy state towards God, without an over curious examination into it.

Then he found himself forsaken of God, and left to the poverty weakness, and misery, of his own proper nature. He was now a mere animal, like unto other creatures made of flesh and blood, but only possessed of a larger understanding; by means of which he should either be led into greater absurdities than they could be guilty of, or else be made sensible of his lost happiness, and put into the right course for regaining it. That is, if he continued a careless apostate, he should

love and admire the goods of this world, the adequate happiness only of animals; and, to recommend them and dissemble their defects, add all the ornament to them that his superior wit could invent. Or else (which is indeed more above brutes, but no nearer the perfection of man as a partaker of God, than the other) he should frame a new world to himself in theory; sometimes by warm imaginations, and sometimes by cool reasonings, endeavour to aggrandize his condition and defend his practice, or at least divert himself from feeling his own meanness and disorder.

If, on the other hand, he should be willing to find out the miseries of his fall, his understanding might furnish him with reasons for constant mourning, for despising and denying himself; might point out the sad effects of turning away from God and losing his Spirit, in the shame and anguish of a nature at variance with itself; thirsting after immortality, and yet subject to death; approving righteousness, and yet taking pleasure in things inconsistent with it; feeling an immense want of something to perfect and satisfy all its faculties, and yet neither able to know what that mighty thing is, otherwise than from its present defects, nor how to attain it, otherwise than by going contrary to its present inclinations.

Well might Adam now find himself *naked:* nothing less than God was departed from him. Till then he had experienced nothing but the goodness and sweetness of God: a heavenly life spread itself through his whole frame, as if he were not made of dust; his mind was filled with angelic wisdom; a direction from above took him by the hand; he walked and thought uprightly, and seemed not to be a child or novice in divine things. But now he had other things to experience; something in his soul, that he did not find, nor need to fear, while he was carried on straight forward by the gentle gale of divine grace; something in his body, that he could not see nor complain of, while that body was covered with glory. He feels there a self displeasure, turbulence, and confusion; such as is common to other spirits who have lost God: he sees here causes of present shame and a future dissolution; and a strong engagement to that grovelling life which is common to animals that never enjoyed the divine nature.

The general character, therefore, of man's present state is death: a death from God, whereby we no longer enjoy any intercourse with him, or happiness in him; we no longer shine with his glory, or act with his powers. It is true, while we have a being, "*in him* we must live, and move, and have our being:" but this we do now, not in a *filial* way, but only in a *servile* one, as all, even the meanest creatures, exist in him. It is one thing to receive from God an ability to walk and speak, eat and digest, to be supported by his hand as a part of this earthly creation, and upon the same terms with it, for farther trial or vengeance; and another, to receive from him a life which is his own likeness; to have within us something which is not of this creation, and which is nourished by his own immediate word and power.

Yet this is not the whole that is implied in man's sin. For he is not only inclined himself to all the sottishness of appetite, and all the pride of reason, but he is fallen under the tutorage of the *evil* one, who mightily furthers him in both. The state he was at first placed in, was a state of the most simple subjection to God, and this entitled him to drink of

his Spirit: but when he, not content to be actually in paradise, under as full a light of God's countenance as he was capable of, must know good and evil, and be satisfied upon rational grounds whether it was best for him to be as he was, or not; when disdaining to be directed as a child, he must weigh every thing himself, and seek better evidence than the voice of his Maker and the seal of the Spirit in his heart; then he not only obeyed but became like to that eldest son of pride, and was unhappily entitled to frequent visits, or rather a continued influence from him. As life was annexed to his keeping the command, and accordingly that Spirit, which alone could *form* it unto true life, dwelt in his body; so being sentenced to death for his transgression, he was now delivered unto "him who has the power of death, that is, the devil;" whose hostile and unkindly impressions promote death and sin at once.

This being the state of man, if God should send him a Redeemer, what must that Redeemer do for him? Will it be sufficient for him to be the promulger of a new law, to give us a set of excellent precepts? No: if we could keep them, that alone would not make us happy. A good conscience brings a man the happiness of being consistent with himself, but not that of being raised above himself into God; which every person will find, after all, is the thing he wants. Shall he be the fountain of an *imputed* righteousness, and procure the tenderest favour to all his followers? This is also not enough. Though a man should be allowed to be righteous, and be exempt from all punishment, yet if he is as really enslaved to the corruptions of nature, as endued with these privileges of redemption, he can hardly make himself easy; and whatever favour he can receive from God, here or hereafter, without a communication of himself, it is neither the cure of a spirit fallen, nor the happiness of one reconciled. Must not then our Redeemer be, (according to the character which St. John his forerunner gave of him,) one that "baptizeth with the Holy Ghost;" the Fountain and Restorer of that to mankind, whereby they are restored to their first estate, and the enjoyment of God? And this is a presumptive argument that "the Lord is that Spirit."

II. But it will appear more plainly that he is so, from the second thing proposed; which was the consideration of the person of Jesus Christ.

He was one to whom "God gave not the Spirit by measure; but in him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; and of his fulness we have all received, and grace for grace." Indeed all the communications of the Godhead, which any creatures could receive, were always from him as the word of God: but all that mankind now in an earthly state were to receive, must be from him by means of that body, at first mortal like unto theirs, and then glorious "in the likeness of God," which he took upon him for their sake.

In the beginning, the heavenly Word,—being a Spirit that issued from the Father, and the Word of his power,—made man an image of immortality, according to the likeness of the Father: but he who had been made in the image of God, afterwards became mortal, when the more powerful Spirit was separated from him. To remedy this, the Word became man, that man, by receiving the adoption, might become a son of God once more; that the light of the Father might rest upon the flesh of our Lord, and come bright from thence unto us; and so

man, being encompassed with the light of the Godhead, might be carried into immortality. When he was incarnate and became man, he recapitulated in himself all generations of mankind, making himself the centre of our salvation, that what we lost in Adam, even the image and likeness of God, we might receive in Christ Jesus. By the Holy Ghost coming upon Mary, and the power of the Highest overshadowing her, the incarnation of Christ was wrought, and a new birth, whereby man should be born of God, was shown; that as by our first birth we did inherit death, so by this birth we might inherit life.

This is no other than what St. Paul teaches us: "The first man, Adam, was made a living soul, but the second Adam was made a quickening Spirit." All that the first man possessed of himself, all that he has transmitted to us, is "a living soul;" a nature endued with an animal life, and receptive of a spiritual. But the second Adam is, and was made to us, "a quickening Spirit:" by a strength from him as our Creator, we were at first raised above ourselves; by a strength from him as our Redeemer, we shall again live unto God.

In him is laid up for us that supplement to our nature, which we shall find the need of sooner or later; and that it cannot be countervailed by any assistance from the creatures, or any improvement of our own faculties: for we were made to be happy only in God; and all our labours and hopes, while we do not thirst after our deified state,—to partake as truly of God as we do of flesh and blood, to be glorified in his nature, as we have been dishonoured in our own,—are the labours and hopes of those who utterly mistake themselves.

The Divine Wisdom knew what was our proper consolation though we did not. What does more obviously present itself in the Saviour of the world, than a union of man with God? A union attended with all the propriety of behaviour that *we* are called to, as candidates of the Spirit; such as walking with God in singleness of heart, perfect self-renunciation, and a life of sufferings. A union which submitted to the necessary stages of our progress; where the divine life was hid for the most part in the secret of the soul till death; in the state of separation, comforted the soul, but did not raise it above the intermediate region of Paradise; at the resurrection, clothed the body with heavenly qualities, and the powers of immortality; and at last raised it to the immediate presence and right hand of the Father.

Christ is not only God above us; which may keep us in awe, but cannot save; but he is Immanuel, God with us, and in us. As he is the Son of God, God must be where he is; and as he is the Son of man, he will be with mankind: the consequence of this is, that in the future age, "the tabernacle of God will be with men," and he will show them his glory; and at present he will *dwell* in their hearts by faith in his Son.

I hope it sufficiently appears, that "the Lord is that Spirit." Considering what we are, and what we have been, nothing less than the receiving that Spirit again would be redemption to us; and considering who that heavenly Person was, that was sent to be our Redeemer, we can expect nothing less from him.

III. I proceed now to the third thing proposed, *viz*, To inquire into the nature and operations of the Holy Spirit, as bestowed upon Christians.

And here I shall pass by the particular extraordinary gifts, vouchsafed to the first ages, for the edification of the church; and only consider what the Holy Spirit is to every believer, for his personal sanctification and salvation. It is not granted to every one to raise the dead and heal the sick. What is most necessary, is, to be sure, as to ourselves, that we are "passed from death unto life;" to keep our bodies pure and undefiled, and let them reap that health which flows from a magnanimous patience, and the serene joys of devotion. The Holy Spirit has enabled men to speak with tongues, and to prophesy; but the light that most necessarily attends it, is a light to discern the fallacies of flesh and blood, to reject the irreligious maxims of the world, and to practise those degrees of trust in God, and love to men, whose foundation is not so much in the present appearances of things, as in some that are yet to come. The object which this light brings us most immediately to know, is ourselves; and by virtue of this, one that is born of God, and has a lively hope, may indeed see far into the ways of providence, and farther yet into the holy Scriptures: for the holy Scriptures, excepting some accidental and less necessary parts, are only a history of that new man which he himself is; and providence is only a wise disposal of events for the awakening of particular persons, and ripening the world in general for the coming of Christ's kingdom.

But I think the true notion of the Spirit is, that it is some portion of, as well as preparation for, a life in God, which we are to enjoy hereafter. The gift of the Holy Spirit looks full to the resurrection; for then is the life of God completed in us.

Then, after man has passed through all the *penalties* of sin, the drudgery and vanity of human life, the painful reflections of an awakened mind, the infirmities and dissolution of the body, and all the sufferings and mortifications a just God shall lay in his way; when, by this means, he is come to know God and himself, he may safely be entrusted with true life, with the freedom and ornaments of a child of God; for he will no more arrogate any thing to himself. Then shall the Holy Spirit be fully bestowed, when the flesh shall no longer resist it, but be itself changed into an angelical condition, being clothed upon with the incorruption of the Holy Spirit: when the body, which by being born with the soul, and living through it, could only be called an animal one, shall now become spiritual whilst by the Spirit it rises into eternity.

Every thing in Christianity is some kind of anticipation of something that is to be at the end of the world. If the apostles were to preach by their Master's command, "that the kingdom of God drew nigh;" the meaning was, that from henceforth all men should fix their eyes on that happy time, foretold by the prophets, when the Messiah should come and restore all things; that by renouncing their worldly conversation, and submitting to the gospel institution, they should fit themselves for, and hasten that blessing. "Now are we the sons of God," as St. John tells us: and yet what he imparts to us at present will hardly justify that title, without taking in that fulness of his image, which shall then be displayed in us, when we shall be "the children of God, by being the children of the resurrection."

True believers, then, are entered upon a life, the *sequel* of which

they know not; for it is "a life hid with Christ in God." He, the forerunner, hath attained the end of it, being gone unto the Father; but we can know no more of it than appeared in him while he was upon earth. And even that, we shall not know but by following his steps; which if we do, we shall be so strengthened and renewed day by day in the inner man, that we shall desire no comfort from the present world, through a sense of "the joy set before us;" though as to the outward man, we shall be subject to distresses and decays, and treated as the offscouring of all things.

Well may a man ask his own heart, "whether it is able to admit the Spirit of God?" For where that Divine Guest enters, the laws of another world must be observed. The body must be given up to martyrdom, or spent in the Christian warfare as unconcernedly, as if the soul were already provided of its house from heaven; the goods of this world must be parted with as freely, as if the last fire were to seize them to morrow; our neighbour must be loved as heartily, as if he were washed from all his sins, and demonstrated to be a child of God by the resurrection from the dead. The fruits of this Spirit must not be mere moral virtues, calculated for the comfort and decency of the present life; but holy dispositions, suitable to the instincts of a superior life already begun.

Thus to press forward, whither the promise of life calls him; to turn his back upon the world, and comfort himself in God, every one that has faith, perceives to be just and necessary, and forces himself to do it: every one that has hope does it gladly and eagerly, though not without difficulty; but he that has love, does it with ease and singleness of heart.

The state of love being attended with "joy unspeakable and full of glory," with rest from the passions and vanities of man, with the integrity of an unchangeable judgment, and an undivided will, is, in a great measure, its own reward: yet not so as to supersede the desire of another world. For though such a man, having a free and insatiable love of that which is good, may seldom have need formally to propose to himself the hopes of retribution, in order to overcome his unwillingness to his duty; yet surely he must long for that which is best of all; and feel a plain attraction towards that country, in which he has his place and station already assigned him; and join in the earnest expectation of all creatures, which wait for the manifestation of the sons of God. For now we obtain but some part of his Spirit, to model and fit us for incorruption, that we may, by degrees, be accustomed to receive and carry God within us; and, therefore, the apostle calls it, "the earnest of the Spirit;" that is, a part of that honour which is promised us by the Lord. If, therefore, the earnest, abiding in us, makes us spiritual even now, and that which is mortal is, as it were, swallowed up of immortality; how shall it be when, rising again, we shall see him face to face? When all our members shall break forth into songs of triumph, and glorify him who hath raised them from the dead, and granted them everlasting life? For if this earnest or pledge, embracing man into itself, makes him now cry, "Abba, Father;" what shall the whole grace of the Spirit do, when being given at length to believers it shall make us like unto God, and perfect us through the will of the Father?

And thus I have done what was at first proposed: I have considered the nature of our fall in Adam; the person of Jesus Christ; and the operations of the Holy Spirit in Christians.

The only inference I will draw from what has been said, and principally from the account of man's fall, shall be, The reasonableness of those precepts of self denial, daily suffering, and renouncing the world, which are so peculiar to Christianity, and which are the only foundation, whereon the other virtues, recommended in the New Testament, can be practised or attained, in the sense there intended.

This inference is so natural, that I could not help anticipating it in some measure all the while. One would think it should be no hard matter to persuade a creature to abhor the badges of his misery; to dislike a condition or mansion which only banishment and disgrace have assigned him; to trample on the grandeur, refuse the comforts, and suspect the wisdom, of a life whose nature it is to separate him from his God.

Your Saviour bids you "hate your own life." If you ask the reason, enter into your heart; see whether it be holy, and full of God? or whether, on the other hand, many things that are contrary to him, are wrought there, and it is become a plantation of the enemy? Or if this be too nice an inquiry, look upon your body. Do you find there the brightness of an angel, and the vigour of immortality? If not, be sure your soul is in the same degree of poverty, nakedness, and absence from God. It is true, your soul may sooner be re-admitted to some rays of the light of God's countenance, than your body can: but if you would take any step at all towards it, to dislike your present self must be the first.

You want a reason why you should renounce the world? Indeed you cannot see the prince of it walking up and down, "seeking whom he may devour;" and you may be so far ignorant of his devices, as not to know that they take place, as well in the most specious measures of business and learning, as in the wildest pursuits of pleasure. But this, however, you cannot but see, that the world is not still a paradise of God, guarded and ennobled with the light of glory: it is, indeed, a place where God has determined he will not appear to you at best, but leave you in a state of hope, that you shall see his face when this world is dissolved.

However, there is a way to rescue ourselves, in great measure, from the ill consequences of our captivity; and our Saviour has taught us that way. It is by suffering. We must not only "suffer many things," as he did, and so enter into our glory; but we must also suffer many things, that we may get above our corruption at present, and enjoy the Holy Spirit.

The world has no longer any power over us, than we have a quick relish of its comforts; and suffering abates that. Suffering is, indeed, a direct confutation of the pretences which the flattering tempter gains us by: for I am in human life, and if that life contains such soft ease, ravishing pleasure, glorious eminence, as you promise, why am I thus? Is it because I have not yet purchased riches to make me easy, or the current accomplishments to make me considerable? Then I find that all the comfort you propose, is by leading me off from myself: but I will rather enter deep into my own condition, bad as it is: perhaps I

shall be nearer to God, the Eternal Truth, in feeling sorrows and miseries that are personal and real, than in feeling comforts that are not so I begin already to find that all my grievances centre in one point there is always at the bottom one great loss or defect, which is not the want of friends or gold, of health or philosophy. And the abiding sense of this may possibly become a prayer in the ears of the Most High: a prayer not resulting from a set of speculative notions, but from the real, undissembled state of all that is within me; nor indeed so explicit a prayer as to describe the thing I want; but, considering how strange a want mine is, as explicit a one as I can make. Since then suffering opens me a door of hope, I will not put it from me as long as I live: it helps me to a true discovery of one period of my existence, though it is a low one; and bids fairer for having some connection with a more glorious period that may follow, than the arts of indulgence, the amusements of pride and sloth, and all the dark policy of this world, which wage war with the whole truth, that man must know and feel, before he can look towards God. It may be, while I continue on the cross, I shall, like my Saviour, put off "principalities and powers;" recover myself more and more from the subjection I am indeed in (which he only seemed to be) to those wicked rulers, and to "triumph over them in it." At least, it shall appear, in the day when God shall visit, that my heart, though grown unworthy of his residence, was too big to be comforted by any of his creatures; and was kept for him, as a place originally sacred, though for the present unclean.

But supposing that our state does require of us, to "die daily;" to sacrifice all that this present life can boast of, or is delighted with, before we give up life itself; supposing also, that in the hour we do somewhat of this kind, we receive light and strength from God, to grow superior to our infirmities, and are carried smoothly towards him in the joy of the Holy Ghost; yet how can a man have such frequent opportunities of suffering? Indeed, martyrdoms do not happen in every age, and some days of our lives may pass without reproaches from men; we may be in health, and not want food to eat and raiment to put on; (though health itself and nutrition itself, oblige us to the pain of a constant correction of them;) yet still, the love of God and heavenly hope will not want something to oppress them in this world.

Let a man descend calmly into his heart, and see if there be no root of bitterness springing up; whether at least his thoughts, which are ever in motion, do not sometimes sally out into projects suggested by pride, or sink into indolent trifling, or be entangled in mean anxiety? Does not he find a motion of anger, or of gaiety, leavening him in an instant throughout; depriving him of the meekness, and steady discernment, he laboured after? Or, let him but conceive at any time that unfeigned obedience, and watchful zeal, and dignity of behaviour which is suitable, I do not say to an angel, but to a sinner that has "a good hope through grace," and endeavour to work himself up to it; and if he find no sort of obstacle to this within him, he has indeed then no opportunity of suffering. In short, if he is such an abject sort of creature, as will, unless grace should do him a perpetual violence, relapse frequently into a course of thinking and acting entirely without God; then he can never want occasions of suffering, but will find his own nature to be the same burden to him, as that "faithless and per

verse generation" was to our Saviour, of whom he said, "How long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you?"

I will conclude all with that excellent collect of our church:—"Oh God, who in all ages hast taught the hearts of thy faithful people, by sending to them the light of thy Holy Spirit; grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgment in all things, and evermore to rejoice in his holy comfort, through the merits of Jesus Christ our Saviour; who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the same Spirit, one GOD, world without end. Amen."

SERMON CXXXIX.—*The Ministerial Office.**

"No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron," Hebrews v, 4.

1. THERE are exceeding few texts of Holy Scripture which have been more frequently urged than this against laymen that are neither priests nor deacons, and yet take upon them to preach. Many have asked, "How dare any 'take this honour to himself, unless he be called of God, as was Aaron?'" And a pious and sensible clergyman some years ago published a sermon on these words, wherein he endeavours to show that it is not enough to be inwardly called of God to preach, as many imagine themselves to be, unless they are outwardly called by men sent of God for that purpose, as Aaron was called of God by Moses.

2. But there is one grievous flaw in this argument, as often as it has been urged. "Called of God as was Aaron!" But Aaron did not preach at all: he was not called to it either by God or man. Aaron was called to minister in holy things;—to offer up prayers and sacrifices; to execute the office of a priest. But he was never called to be a preacher.

3. In ancient times the office of a priest and that of a preacher were known to be entirely distinct. And so every one will be convinced that

* Respecting this Sermon the following information is given by Mr. Moore, in his "Life of Mr. Wesley," vol. ii, p.200:—"I was with Mr. Wesley in London when he published that Sermon. He had encouraged me to be a man of *one book;* and he had repeatedly invited me to speak fully whatever objection I had to any thing which he spoke or published. I thought that some things in that discourse were not to be found in THE BOOK; and I resolved to tell him so the first opportunity. It soon occurred. I respectfully observed that I agreed with him, that the Lord had always sent by whom he would send, instruction, reproof, and correction in righteousness, to mankind; and that there was a real distinction between the prophetic and priestly office in the Old Testament, and the prophetic and pastoral office in the New; (where no priesthood is mentioned but that of our Lord;) but I could not think that what he had said concerning the evangelists and the pastors, or bishops, was agreeable to what we read there; viz. that the latter had a right to administer the sacraments, which the former did not possess. I observed, 'Sir, you know that the *evangelists* Timothy and Titus were ordered by the Apostle to ordain *bishops* in every place; and surely they could not impart to them an authority which they did not themselves possess.' He looked earnestly at me for some time, but not with displeasure. He made no reply, and soon introduced another subject. I said no more. The man of *one book* could not dispute against it. I believe, he saw, his love to the Church, from which he never deviated unnecessarily, had, in this instance, led him a little too far."—EDIT.

impartially traces the matter from the beginning. From Adam to Noah, it is allowed by all that the first-born in every family was of course the priest in that family, by virtue of his primogeniture. But this gave him no right to be a preacher, or (in the scriptural language) a prophet. This office not unfrequently belonged to the youngest branch of the family. For in this respect God always asserted his *right* to send by whom he *would* send.

4. From the time of Noah to that of Moses, the same observation may be made. The eldest of the family was the priest, but any other might be the prophet. This, the office of priest, we find Esau inherited by virtue of his birth-right, till he profanely sold it to Jacob for a mess of pottage. And this it was which he could never recover, "though he sought it carefully with tears."

5. Indeed, in the time of Moses, a very considerable change was made with regard to the priesthood. God then appointed that, instead of the first-born in every house, a whole tribe should be dedicated to him; and that all that afterward ministered unto him as priests should be of that tribe. Thus Aaron was of the tribe of Levi. And so likewise was Moses. But he was not a priest, though he was the greatest prophet that ever lived, before God brought his First-begotten into the world. Meantime, not many of the Levites were prophets. And if any were, it was a mere accidental thing. They were not such, as being of that tribe. Many, if not most, of the prophets (as we are informed by the ancient Jewish writers) were of the tribe of Simeon. And some were of the tribe of Benjamin or Judah, and probably of other tribes also.

6. But we have reason to believe there were, in every age, two sorts of prophets. The extraordinary, such as Nathan, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and many others, on whom the Holy Ghost came in an extraordinary manner. Such was Amos in particular, who saith of himself, vii, 14, 15, "I was no prophet, neither a prophet's son. But I was a herdman, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel." The ordinary were those who were educated in "the schools of the prophets," one of which was at Ramah, over which Samuel presided, 1 Sam. xix, 18. These were trained up to instruct the people, and were the ordinary preachers in their synagogues. In the New Testament they are usually termed Scribes, or νομικοι, "expounders of the law." But few, if any of them were priests. These were all along a different order.

7. Many learned men have shown at large that our Lord himself, and all his Apostles, built the Christian Church as nearly as possible on the plan of the Jewish So the great High Priest of our profession sent Apostles and Evangelists to proclaim glad tidings to all the world; and then pastors, preachers, and teachers, to build up in the faith the congregations that should be founded. But I do not find that ever the office of an Evangelist was the same with that of a pastor, frequently called a bishop. He presided over the flock, and administered the sacraments: the former assisted him, and preached the word, either in one or more congregations. I cannot prove from any part of the New Testament, or from any author of the three first centuries, that the office of an evangelist gave any man a right to act as a pastor or bishop.

I believe these offices were considered as quite distinct from each other till the time of Constantine.

8. Indeed, in that evil hour, when Constantine the Great called himself a Christian, and poured in honour and wealth upon the Christians, the case was widely altered. It soon grew common, for one man to take the whole charge of a congregation in order to engross the whole pay. Hence the same person acted as priest and prophet, as pastor and evangelist. And this gradually spread more and more throughout the whole Christian Church. Yet even at this day, although the same person usually discharges both those offices, yet the office of an evangelist or teacher does not imply that of a pastor, to whom peculiarly belongs the administration of the sacraments; neither among the Presbyterians, nor in the Church of England, nor even among the Roman Catholics. All Presbyterian churches, it is well known, that of Scotland in particular, license men to preach before they are ordained, throughout that whole kingdom; and it is never understood that this appointment to preach gives them any right to administer the sacraments. Likewise in our own Church, persons may be authorized to preach, yea, may be Doctors of Divinity, (as was Dr. Alwood at Oxford, when I resided there,) who are not ordained at all, and consequently have no right to administer the Lord's Supper. Yea, even in the Church of Rome itself, if a lay-brother believes he is called to go a mission as it is termed, he is sent out, though neither priest nor deacon, to execute that office, and not the other.

9 But may it not be thought, that the case now before us is different from all these? Undoubtedly in many respects it is. Such a phenomenon has now appeared, as has not appeared in the Christian world before, at least, not for many ages. Two young men sowed the word of God, not only in the churches, but likewise literally "by the high way side;" and indeed in every place where they saw an open door, where sinners had ears to hear. They were members of the Church of England, and had no design of separating from it. And they advised all that were of it to continue therein, although they joined the Methodist society; for this did not imply leaving their former congregation, but only leaving their sins. The Churchmen might go to church still; the Presbyterian Anabaptist, Quaker, might still retain their own opinions, and attend their own congregations. The having a real desire to flee from the wrath to come was the only condition required of them. Whosoever, therefore, "feared God and worked righteousness" was qualified for this society.

10. Not long after, a young man, Thomas Maxfield, offered himself to serve them as a son in the Gospel. And then another, Thomas Richards, and a little after a third, Thomas Westell. Let it be well observed on what terms we received these, viz. as prophets, not as priests. We received them wholly and solely to preach, not to administer sacraments. And those who imagine these offices to be inseparably joined are totally ignorant of the constitution of the whole Jewish as well as Christian Church. Neither the Romish, nor the English, nor the Presbyterian Churches ever accounted them so. Otherwise we should never have accepted the service, either of Mr. Maxfield Richards, or Westell.

11. In 1744, all the Methodist preachers had their first conference. But none of them dreamed, that the being called to preach gave them any right to administer sacraments. And when that question was proposed, "In what light are we to consider ourselves?" it was answered, "As *extraordinary messengers*, raised up to provoke the *ordinary* ones to jealousy." In order hereto, one of our first rules was, given to each preacher, "You are to do *that part* of the work which we appoint." But *what work* was this? Did we ever appoint you to administer sacraments; to exercise the priestly office? Such a design never entered into our mind; it was the farthest from our thoughts: and if any preacher had taken such a step, we should have looked upon it as a palpable breach of this rule, and consequently as a recantation of our connection.

12. For, supposing (what I utterly deny) that the receiving you as a preacher, at the same time gave an authority to administer the sacraments; yet it gave you no other authority than to do it, or any thing else, *where I appoint*. But where did I appoint you to do this? No where at all. Therefore, by this very rule you are excluded from doing it. And in doing it, you renounce the first principle of Methodism, which was wholly and solely to preach the Gospel.

13. It was several years after our society was formed, before any attempt of this kind was made. The first was, I apprehend, at Norwich. One of our preachers there yielded to the importunity of a few of the people, and baptized their children. But as soon as it was known, he was informed it must not be, unless he designed to leave our connection. He promised to do it no more; and I suppose he kept his promise.

14. Now, as long as the Methodists keep to this plan, they cannot separate from the Church. And this is our peculiar glory. It is new upon the earth. Revolve all the histories of the Church, from the earliest ages, and you will find, whenever there was a great work of God in any particular city or nation, the subjects of that work soon said to their neighbours, "Stand by yourselves, for we are holier than you!" As soon as ever they separated themselves, either they retired into deserts, or they built religious houses; or at least formed parties, into which none was admitted but such as subscribed both to their judgment and practice. But with the Methodists it is quite otherwise: they are not a sect or party; they do not separate from the religious community to which they at first belonged; they are still members of the Church; —such they desire to live and to die. And I believe, one reason why God is pleased to continue my life so long is, to confirm them in their present purpose, not to separate from the Church.

15. But, notwithstanding this, many warm men say, "Nay, but you *do* separate from the Church." Others are equally warm, because they say I *do not*. I will nakedly declare the thing as it is.

I hold all the doctrines of the Church of England. I love her liturgy. I approve her plan of discipline, and only wish it could be put in execution. I do not knowingly vary from any rule of the Church, unless in those few instances, where I judge, and as far as I judge, there is an absolute necessity.

For instance, (1.) As few clergymen open their churches to me I am under the necessity of *preaching abroad*.

(2.) As I know no forms that will suit all occasions, I am often under a necessity of *praying extempore.*

(3.) In order to build up the flock of Christ in faith and love, I am under a necessity of uniting them together, and of dividing them into little companies, that they may provoke one another to love and good works.

(4.) That my fellow labourers and I may more effectually assist each other, to save our own souls and those that hear us, I judge it necessary to meet the preachers, or at least, the greater part of them, once a year.

(5.) In those conferences we fix the stations of all the preachers for the ensuing year.

But all this is not separating from the Church. So far from it, that, whenever I have opportunity, I attend the Church service myself, and advise all our societies so to do.

16. Nevertheless, as the generality even of religious people, who do not understand my motives of acting, and who on the one hand hear me profess that I will not separate from the Church, and on the other that I do vary from it in these instances, they will naturally think I am inconsistent with myself. And they cannot but think so, unless they observe my two principles: the one, that I dare not separate from the Church, that I believe it would be a sin so to do; the other, that I believe it would be a sin not to vary from it in the points above mentioned. I say, put these two principles together, First, I will not separate from the Church; yet, Secondly, in cases of necessity, I will vary from it, (both of which I have constantly and openly avowed for upwards of fifty years,) and inconsistency vanishes away. I have been true to my profession from 1730 to this day.

17. "But is it not contrary to your profession to permit service in Dublin at Church hours? For what necessity is there for this? or what good end does it answer?" I believe it answers several good ends, which could not so well be answered any other way. The First is, (strange as it may sound,) to *prevent a separation* from the Church. Many of our society were totally separated from the Church; tney never attended it at all. But now they duly attend the Church every first Sunday in the month. "But had they not better attend it every week?" Yes; but who can persuade them to it? I cannot. I have strove to do it twenty or thirty years, but in vain. The Second is, the weaning them from attending dissenting meetings, which many of them attended constantly, but have now wholly left. The Third is, the constantly hearing that sound doctrine which is able to save their souls.

18. I wish all of you who are vulgarly termed Methodists would seriously consider what has been said. And particularly you whom God hath commissioned to call sinners to repentance. It does by no means follow from hence, that ye are commissioned to baptize, or to administer the Lord's Supper. Ye never dreamed of this, for ten or twenty years after ye began to preach. Ye did not then, like Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, "seek the priesthood also." Ye knew, "no man taketh this h(nour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." O contain yourselves within your own bounds; be content with preaching the Gospel; "do the work of evangelists; proclaim to all

the world the loving kindness of God our Saviour; declare to all, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand: repent ye, and believe the Gospel!" I earnestly advise you, abide in your place; keep your own station. Ye were, fifty years ago, those of you that were then Methodist preachers, *extraordinary messengers* of God, not going in your own will, but *thrust out*, not to supersede, but to "provoke to jealousy," the ordinary messengers. In God's name, stop there! Both by your preaching and example provoke them to love and to good works. Ye are a new phenomenon in the earth,—a body of people who, being of no sect or party, are friends to all parties, and endeavour to forward all in heart-religion, in the knowledge and love of God and man. Ye yourselves were at first called in the Church of England; and though ye have and will have a thousand temptations to leave it, and set up for yourselves, regard them not; be Church-of-England men still; do not cast away the peculiar glory which God hath put upon you, and frustrate the design of providence, the very end for which God raised you up.

19. I would add a few words to those serious people who are not connected with the Methodists; many of whom are of our own Church, the Church of England. And why should *ye* be displeased with us? We do you no harm; we do not design or desire to offend you in any thing; we hold your doctrines; we observe your rules, more than do most of the people in the kingdom. Some of you are clergymen. And why should *ye*, of all men, be displeased with us? We neither attack your character nor your revenue; we honour you for "your work's sake!" If we see some things which we do not approve of, we do not publish them; we rather cast a mantle over them, and hide what we cannot commend. When ye treat us unkindly or unjustly, we suffer it. "Being reviled, we bless;" we do not return railing for railing. O let not *your* hand be upon us!

20. Ye that are rich in this world, count us not your enemies because we tell you the truth, and, it may be, in a fuller and stronger manner than any others will or dare do. Ye have therefore need of us, inexpressible need. Ye cannot buy such friends at any price. All your gold and silver cannot purchase such. Make use of us while ye may. If it be possible, never be without some of those who will speak the truth from their heart. Otherwise, ye may grow gray in your sins; ye may say to your souls, "Peace, peace!" while there is no peace. Ye may sleep on, and dream ye are in the way to heaven, till ye awake in everlasting fire.

21. But whether ye will hear, or whether ye will forbear, we, by the grace of God, hold on our way; being ourselves still members of the Church of England, as we were from the beginning, but receiving all that love God in every Church, as our brother, and sister, and mother. And in order to their union with us, we require no unity in opinions, or in modes of worship, but barely that they "fear God and work righteousness," as was observed. Now, this is utterly a new thing, unheard of in any other Christian community. In what Church or congregation beside, throughout the Christian world, can members be admitted upon these terms, without any other conditions? Point any such out, whoever can: I know none in Europe, Asia, Africa, or America! This is the glory of the Methodists, and of them alone! They are them-

selves no particular sect or party; but they receive those, of all parties, who "endeavour to do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with their God."

CORK, May 4, 1789.

SERMON CXL.—*The Trouble and Rest of Good Men.**

Preached at St. Mary's, in Oxford, on Sunday, Sept. 21, 1735. *Published at the request of several of the hearers.*

"There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest," Job iii, 17.

WHEN God at first surveyed all the works he had made, "behold, they were very good." All were perfect in beauty; and man, the lord of all, was perfect in holiness. And as his holiness was, so was his happiness. Knowing no sin, he knew no pain; but when sin was conceived, it soon brought forth pain. The whole scene was changed in a moment. He now groaned under the weight of a mortal body, and, what was worse, a corrupted soul. That "spirit" which could have borne all his other "infirmities" was itself "wounded," and sick unto death. Thus, "in the day" wherein he sinned, he began to "die;" and thus "in the midst of life we are in death;" yea, "the whole creation groaneth together," being in bondage to sin, and therefore to misery.

The whole world is, indeed, in its present state, only one great infirmary. All that are therein are sick of sin; and their one business is to be healed. And for this very end, the great Physician of souls is continually present with them; marking all the diseases of every soul, and "giving medicines to heal its sickness." These medicines are often painful too: not that God willingly afflicts his creatures, but he allots them just as much pain as is necessary to their health; and for that reason,—because it is so.

The pain of cure must, then, be endured by every man, as well as the pain of sickness. And herein is manifest the infinite wisdom of Him who careth for us, that the very sickness of those with whom he converses may be a great means of every man's cure. The very wickedness of others is, in a thousand ways, conducive to a good man's holiness. They trouble him, it is true; but even that trouble is "health to his soul, and marrow to his bones." He suffers many things from them; but it is to this end, that he may be "made perfect through" those "sufferings."

But as perfect holiness is not found on earth, so neither is perfect happiness.† Some remains of our disease will ever be felt, and some physic will be necessary to heal it. Therefore we must be, more or less, subject to the pain of cure, as well as the pain of sickness. And, accordingly, neither do "the wicked" here "cease from troubling," nor can "the weary be at rest."

Who, then, will "deliver" us "from the body of this death?" Death will deliver

* This appears to have been the first Sermon that Mr. Wesley ever committed to the press. It was preached about a month before he sailed for Georgia; and published the same year by C Rivington, in St. Paul's Church Yard. After remaining out of print upwards of ninety years, it is here republished as an authentic, and not uninteresting, specimen of his preaching at the time when he left his native country to convert Heathens; and, as he states, learned in the ends of the earth, what he least of all suspected, that he had never been converted himself. The reader will observe that while the Sermon displays great seriousness and zeal, it exhibits a very inadequate view of real Christianity. The preacher attributes the sanctification of human nature, in a great measure, to personal sufferings;—assumes that the body is the seat of moral evil; and that sin exists in the best of Christians till they obtain deliverance by the hand of death. With what ability and success he afterward opposed these unevangelical principles, and taught the doctrine of present salvation from all sin by faith in Jesus Christ, is well known to all who are conversant with his Works, and especially with his Journal and Sermons. Viewed in connection with his subsequent writings, this Sermon is of considerable importance, as it serves very strikingly to illustrate the change which took place in his religious sentiments previously to his entrance upon that astonishing career of ministerial labour and usefulness, by which he was so eminently distinguished. As a perfect antidote to the doctrinal mistakes which it contains, the reader is referred to the admirable Sermon, entitled, "The Scripture Way of Salvation," vol. i, p. 384.—EDIT.

† In this life adult Christians are saved from all sin, and are made perfect in love. See Mr Wesley's "Plain Account of Christian Perfection."—EDIT.

us. Death will set those free in a moment, who "were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Death shall destroy at once the whole body of sin,* and therewith its companion—pain. And therefore, "there the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest."

The Scriptures give us no account of the *place* where the souls of the just remain from death to the resurrection; but we have an account of their *state* in these words in explaining which I shall consider,

I. How the wicked do here trouble good men; and,

II. How the weary are there at rest.

Let us consider, First, how the wicked here trouble good men. And this is a spacious field. Look round the world; take a view of all the troubles therein: how few are there of which the wicked are not the occasion! "From whence come wars and fightings among you?" Whence all the ills that embitter society; that often turn that highest of blessings into a curse, and make it "good for man to be alone?" "Come they not hence," from self will, pride, inordinate affection? in one word, from wickedness? And can it be otherwise so long as it remains upon earth? As well may "the Ethiopian change his skin," as a wicked man cease to trouble both himself and his neighbour, but especially good men: inasmuch as, while he is wicked, he is continually injuring either them, or himself, or God.

First. Wicked men trouble those who serve God, by the injuries they do them. As at first, "he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit; even so it is now." And so it must be till all things are fulfilled; "till heaven and earth pass away," "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." For there is an irreconcilable enmity between the Spirit of Christ, and the spirit of the world. If the followers of Christ "were of the world, the world would love its own: but because they are not of the world, therefore the world hateth them." And this hatred they will not fail to show by their words: they will "say all manner of evil against them falsely;" they will "find out many inventions" whereby even "the good that is in them may be evil spoken of;" and in a thousand instances lay to their charge the ill that they know not. From words, in due time, they proceed to deeds; treating the servants as their forefathers did their Master; wronging and despitefully using them in as many ways as fraud can invent, and force accomplish.

It is true, these troubles sit heaviest upon those who are yet weak in the faith, and the more of the Spirit of Christ any man gains, the lighter do they appear to him. So that to him who is truly renewed therein, who is full of the knowledge and love of God, all the wrongs of wicked men are not only no evils, but are matter of real and solid joy. But still, though he rejoices for his own sake, he cannot but grieve for theirs. He hath "great heaviness and continual sorrow in" his "heart, for" his "brethren according to the flesh," who are thus "treasuring up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." His eyes weep for them in secret places; he is horribly afraid for them; yea, he "could wish to be accursed" himself, so they might inherit a blessing. And thus it is, that they who can not only slight, but rejoice in, the greatest injury done to *them*, yet are troubled at that which wicked men do to themselves, and the grievous misery that attends them.

How much more are they troubled at the injuries wicked men are continually offering to God! This was the circumstance which made "the contradiction of sinners" so severe a trial to our Lord himself: "He that despiseth me, despiseth Him that sent me." And how are these despisers now multiplied upon earth! who fear not the Son, neither the Father. How are we surrounded with those who blaspheme the Lord and his Anointed; either reviling the whole of his glorious gospel, or making him a liar as to some of the blessed truths which he hath graciously revealed therein! How many of those who profess to believe the whole, yet in effect, preach another gospel; so disguising the essential doctrines thereof, by their new interpretations, as to retain the words only, but nothing of "the faith once delivered to the saints!" How many who have not yet made shipwreck of the faith, are strangers to the fruits of it! It hath not purified their hearts; it hath not overcome the world. They are yet "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." They are still "lovers of themselves," lovers of the world, "lovers of pleasure," and not "lovers of God." Lovers of God! No. He "is not in all their thoughts." They delight not in

* This doctrine, that we are saved from sin by death, is no where taught in sacred Scripture, as Mr. Wesley afterward perceived, and demonstrated in the treatise just mentioned, and in several of his Sermons.—EDIT.

Him; they thirst not after him; they do not rejoice in doing his will, neither make their boast of his praise. O faith, working by love, whither art thou fled? Surely the Son of man did once plant thee upon earth. Where art thou now? Among the wealthy? No. "The deceitfulness of riches" there "chokes the word, and it becometh unfruitful." Among the poor? No. "The cares of the world" are there, so that it bringeth forth no fruit to perfection. However, there is nothing to prevent its growth among those who have "neither poverty nor riches:"—Yes; "the desire of other things." And experience shows, by a thousand melancholy examples, that the allowed desire of any thing, great or small, otherwise than as a means to the one thing needful, will by degrees banish the care of that out of the soul, and unfit it for every good word or work.

Such is the trouble—not to descend to particulars, which are endless—that wicked men occasion to the good. Such is the state of all good men while on earth. but it is not so with their souls in paradise. In the moment wherein they are loosed from the body, they know pain no more. Though they are not yet possessed of the "fulness of joy," yet all grief is done away. For "there the wicked cease from troubling and there the weary are at rest."

II. 1. "There the weary are at rest,"—which was the Second thing to be considered,—not only from those evils which prudence might have prevented, or piety removed, even in this life; but from those which were inseparable therefrom, which were their unavoidable portion on earth. They are now at rest, whom wicked men would not suffer to rest before: for into the seats of the spirits of just men, none but the spirits of the just can enter. They are at length hid from the scourge of the tongue: their name is not here cast out as evil. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the prophets, do not revile, or separate them from their company. They are no longer despitefully used, and persecuted; neither do they groan under the hand of the oppressor. No injustice, no malice, no fraud, is there; they are all "Israelites indeed, in whom there is no guile." There are no sinners against their own souls; therefore there is no painful pity, no fear for them. There are no blasphemers of God or of his word; no profaners of his name or of his Sabbaths; no denier of the Lord that bought him; none that tramples on the blood of the everlasting covenant: in a word, no earthly or sensual, no devilish spirit; none who do not love the Lord their God with all their heart.

2. There, therefore, "the weary are at rest" from all the troubles which the wicked occasioned; and indeed from all the other evils which are necessary in this world, either as the consequence of sin, or for the cure of it. They are at rest, in the First place, from bodily pain. In order to judge of the greatness of this deliverance, let but those who have not felt it take a view of one who lies on a sick or death bed. Is this he that was "made a little lower than the angels?" How is the glory departed from him! His eye is dim and heavy; his cheek pale and wan; his tongue falters; his breast heaves and pants; his whole body is now distorted, and writhed to and fro. now moist, and cold, and motionless, like the earth to which it is going. And yet, all this which you see is but the shadow of what he feels. You see not the pain that tears his heart, that shoots through all his veins, and chases the flying soul through every part of her once-loved habitation. Could we see this too, how earnestly should we cry out, "O sin, what hast thou done! To what hast thou brought the noblest part of the visible creation! Was it for this the good God made man?" O no! Neither will he suffer it long. Yet a little while, and all the storms of life shall be over, and thou shalt be gathered into the store house of the dead; and "there the weary are at rest!"

3. They "are at rest" from all those infirmities and follies which they could not escape in this life. They are no longer exposed to the delusions of sense, or the dreams of imagination. They are not hindered from seeing the noblest truths, by inadvertence; nor do they ever lose the sight they have once gained, by inattention. They are not entangled with prejudice, nor ever misled by hasty or partial views of the object: and, consequently, no error is there. O blessed place, where truth alone can enter! truth unmixed, undisguised, enlightening every man that cometh into the world! where there is no difference of opinions; but all think alike; all are of one heart, and of one mind: where that offspring of hell, controversy, which turneth this world upside down, can never come: where those who have been sawn asunder thereby, and often cried out in the bitterness of their soul, "Peace, peace!" shall find what they then sought in vain, even a peace which none taketh from them.

4. And yet all this, inconceivably great as it is, is the least part of their deliverance. For in the moment wherein they shake off the flesh, they are delivered, not only from the troubling of the wicked, not only from pain and sickness, from folly

and infirmity; but also from all sin. A deliverance this, in sight of which all the rest vanish away. This is the triumphal song which every one heareth when he enters the gates of paradise:—"Thou, being dead, sinnest no more. Sin hath no more dominion over thee. For in that thou diedst, thou diedst unto sin once; but in that thou livest, thou livest unto God."*

5. There, then, "the weary are at rest." The blood of the Lamb hath healed all their sickness, hath washed them throughly from their wickedness, and cleansed them from their sin. The disease of their nature is cured; they are at length made whole; they are restored to perfect soundness. They no longer mourn the "flesh lusting against the Spirit;" the "law in their members" is now at an end, and no longer "wars against the law of their mind, and brings them into captivity to the law of sin." There is no root of bitterness left; no remains even of that sin which did "so easily beset them;" no forgetfulness of "Him in whom they live, and move, and have their being;" no ingratitude to their gracious Redeemer, who poured out his soul unto death for them; no unfaithfulness to that blessed Spirit who so long bore with their infirmities. In a word, no pride, no self-will is there; so that they who are "delivered from the bondage of corruption" may indeed say one to another, and that in an emphatical sense, "Beloved, now are we the children of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

6. Let us view, a little more nearly, the state of a Christian at his entrance into the other world. Suppose "the silver cord" of life just "loosed," and "the wheel broken at the cistern;" the heart can now beat no more; the blood ceases to move; the last breath flies off from the quivering lips, and the soul springs forth into eternity. What are the thoughts of such a soul that has just subdued her last enemy, death? that sees the body of sin lying beneath her, and is new born into the world of spirits? How does she sing, "'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be unto God,' who hath given me 'the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ!' O happy day, wherein I shall begin to live! wherein I shall taste my native freedom! When I was 'born of a woman' I had 'but a short time to live,' and that time was 'full of misery;' that corruptible body pressed me down, and enslaved me to sin and pain. But the snare is broken, and I am delivered. Henceforth I know them no more. That head is no more an aching head: those eyes shall no more run down with tears: that heart shall no more pant with anguish or fear; be weighed down with sorrow or care: those limbs shall no more be racked with pain: yea, 'sin hath no more dominion over' me. At length, I have parted from thee, O my enemy; and I shall see thy face no more! I shall never more be unfaithful to my Lord, or offend the eyes of his glory; I am no longer that wavering, fickle, self-inconsistent creature, sinning and repenting, and sinning again. No. I shall never cease, day or night, to love and praise the Lord my God with all my heart, and with all my strength. But what are ye? Are 'all these ministering spirits sent forth to minister to' one 'heir of salvation?' Then, dust and ashes, farewell! I hear a voice from heaven saying, 'Come away, and rest from thy labours. Thy warfare is accomplished; thy sin is pardoned; and the days of thy mourning are ended.'"

7. My brethren, these truths need little application. Believe ye that these things are so? What, then, hath each of you to do, but to "lay aside every weight, and run with patience the race set before" him? to "count all things" else "but dung" and dross; especially those grand idols, learning and reputation, if they are pursued in any other measure, or with any other view, than as they conduce to the knowledge and love of God? to have this "one thing" continually in thine heart, "when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up?"—to have thy "loins" ever "girt," and thy "light burning?"—to serve the Lord thy God with all thy might; if by any means, when he requireth thy soul of thee, perhaps in an hour when thou lookest not for him, thou mayest enter "where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest?"

* The sentiment which is here again expressed, that it is death which destroys sin in the human heart, though couched in the language of an Apostle, is a branch of that philosophical Mysticism which Mr. Wesley entertained at this early period of his life, and which he afterward renounced for the scriptural doctrine of salvation by faith. According to the New Testament, every believer is already delivered from the dominion of sin; and the Bible never represents the entire sanctification of our nature as effected by death. It is the work of the Holy Spirit; and is not suspended upon the dissolution of the body, but upon the exercise of a steadfast faith in the almighty Saviour. —EDIT.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

NOTES ON THE SERMONS.

VOLUME I.

PREFACE, p. vii—"Ηυτε καπνος," [Like smoke.]

TABLE OF CONTENTS, p. xii.

The Sermon numbered *LVIII, ought to be LIX. With this correction, the true aggregate number of Sermons in the two volumes will now be found to be CXLI.

SERMON IV, p. 41.

Non persuadebis, etiamsi persuaseris: [Thou shalt not persuade me, though thou shouldst persuade me.]

SERMON XIII, p. 110. *Ipso facto,* [By the act itself.]

SERMON XV, p. 132.

Esse quoque in fatis reminiscitur, affore tempus,
Quo mare, quo tellus, correptaque regia cœli
Ardeat, et mundi moles operosa laboret.

[It is remembered also to be fated that a time will be, when the sea, the land, and the court of heaven, wrapt in flames, shall burn, and the mighty fabric of the universe shall labour.]

SERMON XX.—The Lord Our Righteousness.

[This Sermon, and the concessions made to Mr. Whitefield in 1743, with the hope of maintaining union with him, are instances of Mr. Wesley's anxiety to approach his Calvinistic brethren, in his modes of expression, as far as possible. In this effort he sometimes exposed himself to be misunderstood on both sides; and became afterward convinced of "a leaning to Calvinism," which he did not fail to correct. In the Minutes of 1770, he remarks:—"We said in 1744, 'We have leaned too much toward Calvinism:'" and then proceeds to show "wherein," and to apply the corrective. This led on to the controversy which produced the immortal Checks of Fletcher. Since that period, (so complete has been the effect of those admirable writings,) the Methodist preachers and societies have been in no danger of Calvinism; nor has there been any occasion since the Conference of 1770, to ask wherein they had leaned too much thereto.—See *Watson's Life of Wesley,* pp. 210–226.]

SERMON XXVIII, p. 263.

Linquenda tellus, et domus, et placens
Uxor: nec harum quas seris arborum
Te, præter invisam cupressum,
Ulla brevem dominum sequetur!

[Your land, and house, and pleasing wife, must be left behind; nor of these trees which you plant, will any, except the hated cypress, follow you, their short-lived lord!]

SERMON XXXVII, p. 330. Ενθυσιασμος, [Enthusiasm.]

SERMON LVI, p. 501.

Quæritur, Ægysthus quare sit factus adulter?
In promptu causa est: desidiosus erat.

[Is it asked why Ægysthus became an adulterer? The cause is obvious: he was slothful.]

VOLUME II.

SERMON LXXIX, p. 157.

Totam
Mens agitans molem, et magno se corpore miscens:

[The Soul that pervades and actuates the whole fabric of the universe.]

SERMON LXXXII, p. 179.

Totam
Mens agitans molem, et magno se corpore miscens.

[For a translation see the preceding note.]

SERMON LXXXIV, p. 194.

Nec me, qui cætera vincit
Impetus, et rapido contrarius evehor orbi.

[I am carried on against the rapid current of the world; nor does its force, which conquers others, conquer me.]

SERMON LXXXIX, p. 226.

Virûm volitare per ora. [To be in every body's mouth.]

SERMON XCII, p. 250.

Populus me sibilat, at mihi plaudo
Ipse domi quoties nummos contemplor in arcâ.

[The people hiss me, but I applaud myself while at home I gaze upon my hoarded money.]

SERMON XCIII, p. 260.

Eutrapelus, cuicunque nocere volebat,
Vestimenta dabat pretiosa.

[Eutrapelus, whenever he wished to injure any one, made him a present of a suit of fine clothes.]

SERMON CIV, p. 343.

Homo sum: humani nihil a me alienum puto!

[I am a man: I take an interest in whatever relates to man.]

SERMON CVII, p. 357.

Qualia nunc hominum producit corpora tellus.

[Men of such stature as the earth now produces.]

p. 359. *Difficilis, querulus, laudator temporis acti*
Se puero, censor, castigatorque minorum.

[Hard to please, querulous, praising the time when they were boys, and censorious reprovers of the young.]

SERMON CXVII, p. 417.

Necesse est
Multa diu concreta modis inolescere miris.
Ergo exercentur pœnis.
Aliæ panduntur inanes
Suspensæ ad ventos: aliis sub gurgite vasto
Infectum eluitur scelus, aut exuritur igni.

[Of necessity, many long accumulated crimes wonderfully adhere [to the souls of the wicked.] Hence they are plied with expiatory tortures.

Some are hung up to the subtile winds. From others the deep dyed guilt is washed away under a vast whirlpool, or is burnt out by fire.]

SERMON CXXIV.—On the Wedding Garment.

[In Mr. Wesley's Journal for March, 1790, he says, "*Friday*, 26.—I finished my sermon on the Wedding Garment; perhaps the last that I shall write. My eyes are now waxed dim; my natural force is abated. However, while I can, I would fain do a little for God before I drop into the dust."]

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